THE TIMES OF INDIA

anupama chopra

# 100 FILMS TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# 100 FILMS TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE

anupama chopra

**100 FILMS TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE**

Copyright © Anupama Chopra, 2013
First edition 2013
Reprinted in 2015

by
Bennett, Coleman & Co., Ltd.
7, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg
New Delhi-110002

**All rights reserved**
No part of this work may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means (graphic, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, tape, web distribution, information storage and retrieval systems or otherwise) without prior written permission of the publisher.

**Disclaimer**
Due care and diligence has been taken while printing and editing the book. The Publisher does not hold any responsibility for any mistake that may have crept in inadvertently. The Publisher shall be free from any liability for damages and losses of any nature arising from or related to the content of the Book.

Published, Design & Distributed by

Times Group Books

(A division of Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd)
Times Annexe, 9-10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002

**Cover design by** Rahul Nanda
**Author photograph by** R. Burman

Printed at: Gopsons Papers Ltd.

ISBN: 978-93-82299-35-6

Price: ₹299

# 100 FILMS
## (arranged alphabetically)


**Foreword** . . . . . .5
**Introduction** . . . . . .7
**Acknowledgements** . . . . . .9
40-Year-Old Virgin, The . . . . . .11
A Better Tomorrow . . . . . .12
A Streetcar Named Desire . . . . . .13
Ace in the Hole . . . . . .15
Aguirre: The Wrath of God . . . . . .16
Alien . . . . . .17
All About Eve . . . . . .18
Amadeus . . . . . .20
Amar Akbar Anthony . . . . . .21
Amar Prem . . . . . .23
Amores Perros . . . . . .25
Anand . . . . . .26
Andaz . . . . . .27
Annie Hall . . . . . .28
Ardh Satya . . . . . .29
Arth . . . . . .31
Bandini . . . . . .32
Bandit Queen . . . . . .34
Battleship Potemkin . . . . . .36
Belle de Jour . . . . . .37
Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief . . . . . .39
Bonnie and Clyde . . . . . .40
Boogie Nights . . . . . .41
Borat . . . . . .42
Brazil . . . . . .43
Breakfast at Tiffany's . . . . . .44
Breathless . . . . . .45
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid . .46
Casablanca . . . . . .47
Charulata . . . . . .48
Children of Heaven . . . . . .50
Chinatown . . . . . .51
Chungking Express . . . . . .52
Chupke Chupke . . . . . .54
Cinema Paradiso . . . . . .55
Citizen Kane . . . . . .56
City of God . . . . . .57
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon . . . . . .58
Cyrano de Bergerac . . . . . .59
Deewaar . . . . . .60
Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge . . . . . .62
Don . . . . . .64
Edge of Heaven, The . . . . . .65
Enter the Dragon . . . . . .66
E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial . . . . . .67
Farewell My Concubine . . . . . .69
Godfather, The . . . . . .70
Hum Dono . . . . . .71
In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones . . .73
Infernal Affairs . . . . . .74
Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro . . . . . .75
Jules et Jim . . . . . .76
Junoon . . . . . .77
Kabhi Kabhie . . . . . .79
Kikujiro . . . . . .81
Kung Fu Hustle . . . . . .82
La Dolce Vita . . . . . .84
Lagaan . . . . . .86
Lawrence of Arabia . . . . . .88

Lost in Translation .....89
Marriage of Maria Braun, The .....91
Modern Times .....92
Mother India .....94
Mughal-e-Azam .....96
Night Watch .....97
North by Northwest .....98
Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror .....99
Oldboy .....100
Pan's Labyrinth .....101
Parinda .....102
Player, The .....104
Pulp Fiction .....106
Pyaasa .....107
Raiders of the Lost Ark .....108
Raise the Red Lantern .....109
Rashomon .....110
Rules of the Game, The .....111
Saturday Night Fever .....112
Seventh Seal, The .....113
Shakespeare in Love .....114
Shining, The .....116
Sholay .....117
Sideways .....118
Spirited Away .....119
Star Wars .....120
Sullivan's Travels .....122
Tampopo .....123
Taxi Driver .....124
Teesri Manzil .....126
This Is Spinal Tap .....127
To Be or Not to Be .....128
To Kill a Mockingbird .....129
Tokyo Story .....130
Underground .....131
Vertigo .....132
Wicker Man, The .....134
Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown .....135
Y Tu Mamá También .....136
Z .....138
Zanjeer .....140
**Film Stills/Photographs Courtesy** .142
**Trivia Credit List** .....143

# FOREWORD

Film is the only art form where every single patron has an opinion on how it could have been done better. No other artistic expression garners that reaction. Most people hear a piece of music and either like it or not. They see a painting and either like it or not. They won't tell you what is missing in the crescendo or why the landscape should have been blue and not red.

Yet you put the same lot in a cinema hall and they will probably exit having worked out how the set up could have been tighter, why the heroine should not have died and how the hero should have actually avenged her death.

What is this sense of ownership? What makes the viewer so part of the process? What makes everyone believe they too could do it?

Is it because movies are the most bastardized form of art? One that accumulates every art form into one. It's visual, it's aural, it's the spoken word, it's photography, it's art, it's craft, it's acting, it's theater. It is all-encompassing and, therefore, also the most pedestrian.

Or is it the glamour, the exhibition, the large screen in a dark room, so large that your own life seems small?

Is there truly some *magic* here or is everyone just a story teller at heart?

I don't have an answer... only a belief that everyone loves the movies. Different degrees of affection of course but affection none the less and that is why this book comes so handy.

In my experience people want to watch good films but they don't know where to start. I'm constantly asked, "Give me a list of movies that I must watch." These are people who enjoy films but don't necessarily keep up with new releases or follow particular directors. They have a latent interest in cinema and who knows, maybe a few masterpieces could transform these accidental viewers into hard core cinephiles.

I for one, am all for the conversion so the next time I am asked "What should I watch?", "Recommend something classic" or "Which film of Kubrick should I see?" I know what to do. I shall gift them this book.

Of course there are many, many more works that need and deserve to be seen but one has to start somewhere.

This book contains some of my favourite films, some I have seen close to 200 times, some I saw once and never forgot, some I go back to and still can't break down completely and some I just want to repeat the dialogue of.

These films have the power to move you to a place where you can't come back from, they have the ability to shift and rearrange your insides. They resonate very deeply and sometimes they just make you feel hapy to be alive.

So here goes, ladies and gentlemen, a selection of 100 films that could not have been done better.

**Zoya Akhtar**

# INTRODUCTION

Lists are designed to be divisive. To incite fervour, argument and dissent. Films are a subjective passion. What you like says something about who you are at that point in time. As director John Landis says in the introduction to *The Film That Changed My Life: 30 Directors on Their Epiphanies in the Dark*: "It's extremely important to know that how you appreciate a movie has everything to do with your life experience at the moment when you see it, how you see it and where you see it."

Which effectively means that there can never be a definitive list of the 100 best films in the world. This book is a list of films that I love. These are films that speak to me. Each time I watch *Mughal-e-Azam*, I'm staggered by its scale, ambition and artistry. I weep profusely in *Cinema Paradiso*. I know that Jai doesn't make it out of *Sholay* alive but I tear up whenever I see Amitabh Bachchan writhing in Dharmendra's arms. And when Radha, the achingly sad, silent widow played by Jaya Bachchan, shuts her windows after Jai's death, the tears really start to flow. I'm truly afraid of Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*. I'm exhilarated by Mr. Bachchan's *Khaike paan banaraswala* in Don. And the inspired, superbly inventive lunacy of *Kung Fu Hustle* gives me a palpable high.

Some of the films in this book are part of the World Cinema canon. Experts around the world agree that these are films you must know to be film literate. *Citizen Kane* still tops most lists as the best film ever made. *Mother India* is arguably the first step toward understanding the tropes of Hindi cinema. Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 classic *Battleship Potemkin* is a foundation stone of film. And really, is there anyone who hasn't seen *The Godfather* or *Sholay*?

But this is not a World Classics list. My hope is that it will function as a cinema smorgasbord with something for every mood and moment of your life. I also hope that it helps you discover gems that you might have missed – like Preston Sturges' *Sullivan's Travels*, about a film director who, tired of making lightweight comedies, aspires to 'serious' cinema but eventually discovers that "there is a lot to be said for making people laugh." Or perhaps the Japanese film *Tampopo*, a brilliantly wacky celebration of food in which one character asks another: "How are my noodles?" The reply is: "They have sincerity but they lack guts." Or even India's first Hinglish film, *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*, a grungy,

delectably eccentric movie set in an architecture school (among other things, it is also the film debut of Shah Rukh Khan).

The great American film critic Roger Ebert once said: "Of all the arts, movies are the most powerful aid to empathy, and good ones make us into better people." I believe that to be true. Films open doors. They give us new worlds to frolic in. The best bore into us, eliciting emotions that we never knew we had.

I love movies and I especially love Bollywood. For me, Hindi movies have long been a necessary comfort and a collective expression of hope. I hope my ardour is infectious and this book inspires you to revisit old loves and discover new passions.

To paraphrase a line from the Dr. Seuss classic *Oh, The Places You'll Go*: Your movies are waiting. So... get on your way!

**Anupama Chopra**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

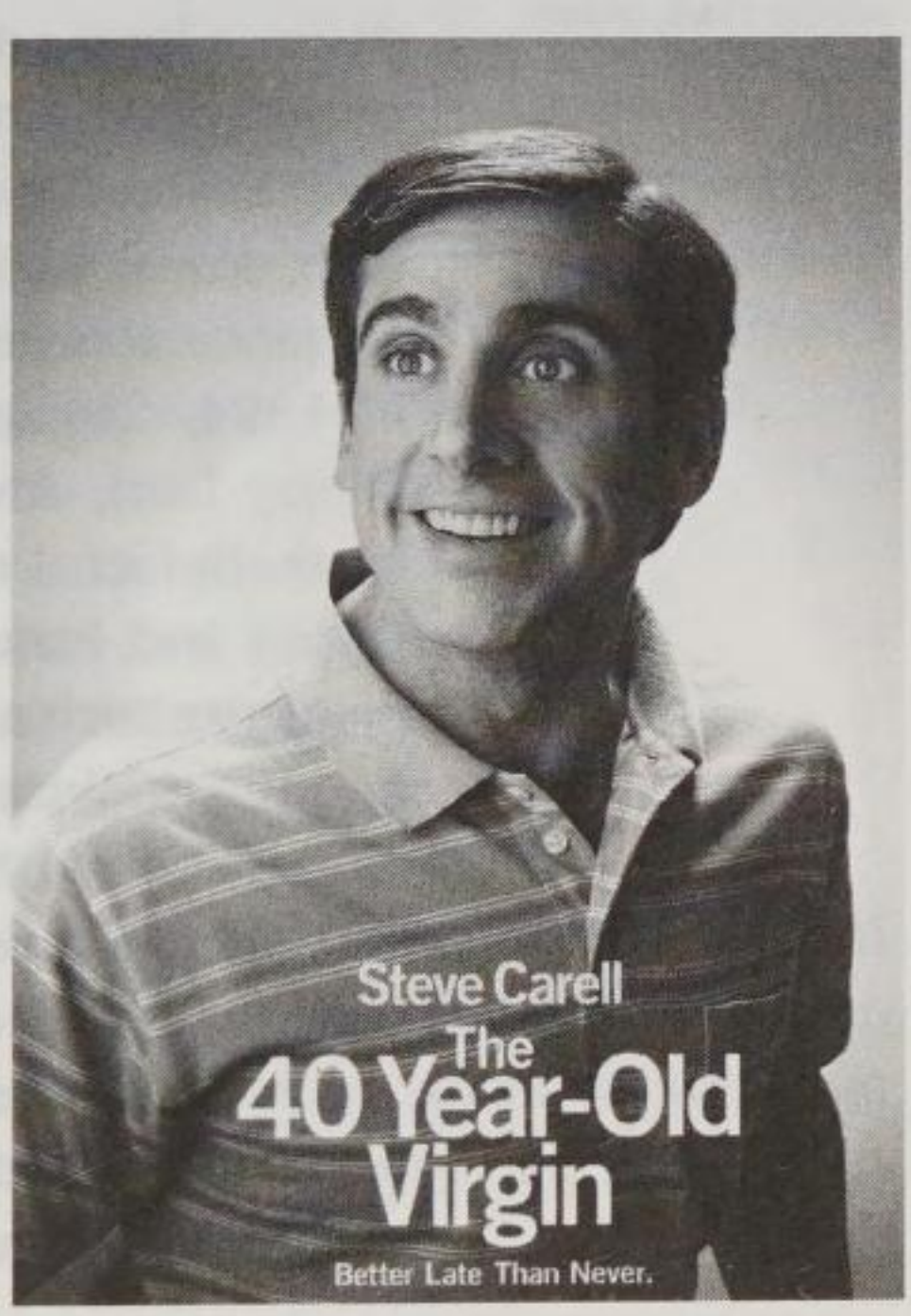
This book originated as a column in *Mumbai Mirror*. First and foremost, thank you to *Mirror* editor Meenal Baghel for giving my work such a prominent platform. Thank you to all the producers and studios, in Bollywood and elsewhere, who so generously gave us images for this book. Thanks Rahul Nanda for always coming through and creating such a great cover. And my deepest gratitude to my associates Kalpana Nair and Sonal Pandya, who spent months scouring trivia and ascertaining facts – this book wouldn't have possible without you!

# 40-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN, THE (2005)

*The 40-Year-Old Virgin* is exactly about that – an unfailingly nice, forty-year-old man, Andy played by Steve Carell, who works in an electronics superstore and who has just never managed to lose his virginity. His co-workers discover this after a game of poker. When the talk turns dirty, Andy tries to fake a story but ends up revealing himself when he describes a woman's breasts feeling like 'bags of sand'. After which, everyone takes it upon themselves to help Andy out of his peculiar predicament. The store manager Paula played by the excellent Jane Lynch even offers to be his sex buddy. At one point, she instructs him: "Virgin, get back to work."

This is an excruciatingly funny movie. There is a chest-waxing scene, which made me laugh till it hurt. And a superbly written scene in which the boys exchange one-liners that start with "You know how I know you're gay?" Not to mention, many delightfully disgusting jokes involving body fluids. But the core of the film is a sweet love story, with the luminous Catherine Keener playing the woman who finally rescues Andy. *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* is my favourite guilty pleasure.

**DIRECTOR**
JUDD APATOW
**STARRING**
STEVE CARELL, PAUL RUDD, SETH ROGEN
**RUNNING TIME**
118 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY




*I work with the same people over and over, because it's hard to find actors who are really funny and willing to give up all their personal problems and conversations and use them in the story. So when I find someone great, I tend to stick with them.*

**– Judd Apatow to *The Independent***

**TRIVIA**

The scene where Andy has his chest hair removed required Steve Carell to do the same and the cameras recorded the rest of the actors' reactions live.

# A BETTER TOMORROW (1986)

**DIRECTOR**
JOHN WOO
**STARRING**
TI LUNG, LESLIE CHEUNG, CHOW YUN-FAT
**RUNNING TIME**
95 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
HONG KONG
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
CANTONESE, MANDARIN, ENGLISH
**GENRE**
ACTION, CRIME, DRAMA

*A Better Tomorrow* is essentially a Hindi film in disguise. We have brothers on the opposite sides of the law – one is a cop, the other a gangster. We have a gritty bromance between the gangster and his buddy Mark, played by the effortlessly sexy Chow Yun-Fat. We even have a father figure, a romantic angle and high emotion, all set against the Hong Kong skyline.

John Woo's breakthrough film made gangsters cool – they sauntered around in dark glasses and long overcoats – and violence, balletic. A set-piece dinner assassination has Mark shooting the enemies as he moves backward, down a long corridor, picking up guns he has hidden in potted plants. In Woo's subsequent films like *The Killer* and *Hard Boiled*, the action became even more choreographed with doves, bodies and blood, mingling with a terrifying elegance. Inevitably, *A Better Tomorrow* was Bollywoodized. In 1994, Sanjay Gupta made *Aatish: Feel the Fire*, with Sanjay Dutt, Atul Agnihotri and Aditya Pancholi playing Mark. In fact, I even recall a magazine interview in which Gupta and Pancholi argued about whose idea it was to plagiarize such an apt film. *Aatish* was predictably lame. Go find the original instead.

*It was my turning point, the first time I had the chance to use my own technique and my style to tell a story. I put all my idols' images in it. The sunglasses were from Ken Takakura, the raincoat was from Alain Delon, and the way Chow Yun-Fat held the guns, that was all Steve McQueen and Clint Eastwood*

**– Director John Woo to *Entertainment Weekly* magazine**

**TRIVIA**

Mark's speech and dress became a sensation and even gangsters in Hong Kong started wearing suits and ties with long coats.

# A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE (1951)

Nothing prepares you for the visceral shock of Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

His beauty takes your breath away. Standing in sweaty, torn T-shirts, shouting for his wife Stella, he is a sculpture of brutality, rage and sexuality. American critic Roger Ebert once wrote that 'no performance had more influence on modern film acting styles than Brando's work as Stanley Kowalski'. Stanley is a working-class man, living in a small, claustrophobic apartment in New Orleans. His wife's sister Blanche DuBois, played by Vivien Leigh, comes to stay.

Blanche fancies herself a gracious Southern belle (she describes her name as 'whitewood – like an orchard in spring') but beyond her pretensions, there are suggestions of a troubled, sexually charged history. Stanley rails into her verbally and eventually physically and irrevocably shatters her fragile mind. Elia Kazan, who had directed Tennessee Williams' iconic play on stage, expertly translates it on film.

The seamy apartment, potent passions and relentless fury sear the screen. Brando is the life-force and Leigh, shattered and tragic, provides the perfect foil. At one point, she says, "I don't want realism. I want magic." The climactic confrontation between her and Stanley is heart-breaking. The film was the first to win three out of four acting Oscars. Leigh picked up the Oscar for Best Actress as did Karl Malden and Kim Hunter for supporting roles. Incredibly, Brando lost to Humphrey Bogart for *The African Queen.*

**DIRECTOR**
ELIA KAZAN
**STARRING**
VIVIEN LEIGH, MARLON BRANDO, KIM HUNTER
**RUNNING TIME**
122 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA

*I have worked with many movie directors – some good, some fair, some terrible. Kazan was the best actors' director by far of any I've worked for. 'Gadg', who got his nickname because of an affection for gadgets, was the only one who ever really stimulated me, got into a part with me and virtually acted it with me.*

**– Marlon Brando in his autobiography**
***Brando: Songs My Mother Taught Me***

## AWARDS

4 **Academy Awards** for Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Karl Malden), Best Actress in a Leading Role (Vivien Leigh), Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Kim Hunter) and Best Art Direction (Richard Gay and George Hopkins) in 1952.

Nominated in 8 other categories for Best Actor in a Leading Role (Marlon Brando), Best Director (Elia Kazan), Best Writing, Screenplay (Tennessee Williams), Best Cinematography (Harry Stradling), Best Costume Design (Lucinda Ballard), Best Music (Alex North), Best Sound Recording (Nathan Levinson), Best Motion Picture.

The **Volpi Cup** for Best Actress (Vivien Leigh).

The Special Jury Prize (Elia Kazan) at the **Venice Film Festival** in 1951.

### TRIVIA

The scene in which Stanley is begging for his wife's forgiveness and presses his head against her body to hear the heartbeat for their unborn child was cut by the censors and was only included in the 1993 restoration.

# ACE IN THE HOLE (1951)

*Ace in the Hole* is perhaps the one Billy Wilder film that you haven't seen. It came right after his classic *Sunset Boulevard* but was a resounding flop. That's probably because the view of humanity it offers is so dark, so cynical and sadly, so true.

The film is about a corrupt reporter Chuck Tatum – an astoundingly savage Kirk Douglas. Tatum says: "I can handle big news and little news. And if there is no news, I'll go out and bite a dog." In other words, he creates it. After having been thrown out of eleven jobs, Tatum finds himself stuck in a tiny newspaper in New Mexico. But his big break arrives – the owner of a remote trading post is trapped inside a cliff. Tatum recognizes the human interest potential of this story. In collusion with the corrupt sheriff, he masterminds a longer route to dig the man out. Meanwhile, he creates a media circus, spins himself into a star and becomes a 1000-dollars-a-day reporter. But the film isn't just an indictment of Tatum. Equally complicit in the crime is the public, hungry for a show – as the man slowly suffocates in the cliff, a carnival sets up outside, including a folk singer belting out an inspirational song and a ferris wheel. This isn't easy viewing but Wilder's take on the media and masses is even more relevant today. When audiences rejected *Ace in the Hole,* Wilder said: "F*** them all. It's the best picture I ever made." It might well be.

**DIRECTOR**
BILLY WILDER
**STARRING**
KIRK DOUGLAS, JAN STERLING, RICHARD BENEDICT
**RUNNING TIME**
111 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA, FILM NOIR

**TRIVIA**

This story was inspired by a 1925 incident in which a Kentucky man, trapped in a mine, was turned by reporters into a nationwide sensation. Radio writer Walter Newman gave it to Wilder in the form of a treatment.

*You may hate me as Chuck Tatum… or cheer me – but I don't think you'll be indifferent… and as long as it stirs you, excites you… as an actor I'll be satisfied."*

**– Kirk Douglas in a newspaper advertisement before the film's release**

## AWARDS

Nominated for an **Academy Award** for Best Story and Screenplay (Billy Wilder, Lesser Samuels, Walter Newman) in 1952.

The **International Award** at the **Venice Film Festival**.

Nominated for the **Golden Lion** in 1951.

# AGUIRRE: THE WRATH OF GOD (1972)

**DIRECTOR**
WERNER HERZOG

**STARRING**
KLAUS KINSKI, RUY GUERRA

**RUNNING TIME**
93 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
WEST GERMANY

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
GERMAN

**GENRE**
HISTORICAL DRAMA

*Aguirre* is a film about hubris, hobbling ambition and the frailty of humans. Based on the true story of Spanish explorers in 1560, the film follows the journey of a group of men and two women down a river in the jungles of Peru, in search of the fabled city of gold, El Dorado. There is of course no El Dorado and as the days pass, the group descends into starvation, sickness and eventually death. Their commander Aguirre descends into madness, dreaming of kingdoms and glory. At one point, he declares that he will 'produce history as others produce plays.' Herzog tells this story like a fever dream. The horrors that unfold have a poetic beauty. As you watch, you wonder: how did they shoot this? Legend has it that production was traumatic with Herzog eventually pointing a gun at his leading man – Klaus Kinski, whose impassively beautiful face and magnificent performance, steer the film. *Aguirre: The Wrath of God* influenced many films including Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and Terrence Malick's *The New World*. This is epic cinema.

*The moment I first saw him (Klaus Kinski), I knew it was my destiny to make films and his to act in them.*

**–Werner Herzog to Roger Ebert**

## TRIVIA

The film was the first of five collaborations between director Werner Herzog and actor Klaus Kinski. They famously had an extremely volatile but productive working relationship. No other director worked with Kinski twice. Herzog even made a documentary on their love-hate relationship as actor and director named *My Best Fiend* (1999).

# ALIEN (1979)

The second test screening of *Alien* has acquired legendary status. It was the spring of 1979, in Dallas. The audience was hooked but silent until the famous breakfast scene, in which the phallic-shaped, dripping-mouthed alien bursts out of Executive Officer Kane's chest. Then all hell broke loose. There are accounts of someone tripping and breaking his arm, people running to the toilet to hurl, ushers keeling over.

The tagline for *Alien* said: In space no one can hear you scream. But the film had audiences screaming for decades after. Ridley Scott artfully builds up the suspense – for the first 45 minutes almost nothing happens. Except for our dread building up. And then, finally when the creature arrives, it's so shocking that you almost never recover. *Alien* created a superb female protagonist – Ripley, played by Sigourney Weaver, who is intelligent, tough and sexy. An apt rival for the alien, described by the ship's science officer Ash, as 'the perfect organism'. "Its structural perfection is matched only by its hostility," he says, "I admire its purity, its sense of survival, unclouded by conscience, remorse or delusions of morality." *Alien* changed the way modern action films were made. Even in repeat viewings, it is guaranteed to make you flinch.

**DIRECTOR**
RIDLEY SCOTT
**STARRING**
SIGOURNEY WEAVER, TOM SKERRITT, JOHN HURT
**RUNNING TIME**
117 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA/UNITED KINGDOM
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
HORROR, SCIENCE FICTION

## TRIVIA

*Nostromo*, the name of the spaceship in the film is the title of a Joseph Conrad book.

*What was considered daring at the time was that we had this ordinary working woman, not in a frilly space dress, but a woman with dirty hands, dealing with people in a crisis. And it's still something they don't do. It's as if they feel they have to turn the woman into some kind of weird science-fiction doll to make it interesting.*

**– Sigourney Weaver in *The Guardian***

## AWARDS

**Academy Award** for Best Visual Effects and was also nominated for Best Art Direction in 1980.

Nominated for 7 **BAFTA Awards** and won the awards for Best Production Design (Michael Seymour) and Best Sound Track (Jerry Goldsmith) in 1980.

Nominated for the **Golden Globe Award** for Best Original Score and the **Grammy Award** for Best Soundtrack Album (Jerry Goldsmith).

# ALL ABOUT EVE (1950)

**DIRECTOR**
JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ
**STARRING**
BETTE DAVIS, ANNE BAXTER, GEORGE SANDERS
**RUNNING TIME**
138 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA

*All About Eve* is one of the finest scripts ever put on screen. Set in the New York theatre world, this 1950 film is studded with memorable characters, lacerating one-liners and devastating insights into the world of showbiz. At the centre is Margo Channing, a celebrated theatre actress played by Bette Davis. Channing is at her peak but she is also 40 years old and keenly aware that the only way to go is down. She is brittle and yet tragically vulnerable.

In contrast, Eve played by Anne Baxter, is a young, starry-eyed, guileless ingénue. Or so we think. Beautiful, manipulative and hideously ambitious, Eve slowly usurps Margo's life. This cannibalization is observed and abetted by a phalanx of characters, which include a venomous theatre critic (an Oscar-winning performance by George Sanders), Margo's director, her writer and his wife who is also Margo's closest friend.

In an interview, Davis said that director Joseph L. Mankiewicz had resurrected her from the dead. Indeed *All About Eve* defined Davis as the ultimate Diva. She got the best lines – my favourite "Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night." Davis wasn't afraid to be ugly but she displays an ageing woman's insecurities with wit and grace. Incredibly she didn't win the Best Actress Oscar but *All About Eve* won 14 nominations – a record that remained unmatched until *Titanic* in 1997. And it still remains the only film in Oscar history to receive four female acting nominations – two for best actress and two for best supporting actress.

To watch *All About Eve* is to partake in the original pleasures of cinema – drama, dialogue, characters, performance. It also includes a cameo by a newcomer named Marilyn Monroe, who glitters in a brief scene as only she can.

*Margo Channing was the kind of dame who would treat her mink coat like a poncho!*

**– Joseph L. Mankiewicz (as reported by Bette Davis in *Vanity Fair*)**

## AWARDS

6 **Academy Awards** including Best Director (Joseph L. Mankiewicz) and Best Picture

The Best Actress at the 1951 **Cannes Film Festival** (Bette Davis) and a Jury Special Prize (Joseph L. Mankiewicz)

The **BAFTA Film Award** for Best Film

The **Golden Globe** for Best Screenplay (Joseph L. Mankiewicz) in 1951

## TRIVIA

Davis' performance as a star past her prime is always paired with another famous 1950 performance – Gloria Swanson's ageing silent star in *Sunset Boulevard*. Both were nominated for best actress, but neither won; the Oscar went to Judy Holliday for *Born Yesterday*.

# AMADEUS (1984)

**DIRECTOR**
MILOS FORMAN
**STARRING**
F. MURRAY ABRAHAM, TOM HULCE, ELIZABETH BERRIDGE
**RUNNING TIME**
160 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
BIOGRAPHY, DRAMA

## TRIVIA

Although the movie's sound track was pre-recorded with professional musicians, Hulce really is pounding out those notes. Before going to Prague for filming, Hulce hired a piano teacher.

*Amadeus* is a sumptuous feast. The film is about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and each frame is filled with gorgeous wigs, costumes, palace halls and of course, music. But the genius of the film is that it tells us Mozart's story through the eyes of his chief rival, the court composer Antonio Salieri. In comparison to Mozart, who is depicted here as a sort of 18th-century rockstar, Salieri is painfully mediocre. But that is not his curse. Salieri's tragedy is that he is aware that he is mediocre. He is the only one in Vienna who recognizes how sublime Mozart's music is. Salieri complains that it is as though, Mozart was taking 'dictation from God'. The music moves Salieri to tears but also fills him with jealousy. He rages at God, asking why he was given the desire to create music but not the talent required to do so.

At the heart of *Amadeus* is F. Murray Abraham's Oscar-winning performance as Salieri. His envious machinations to sabotage Mozart's career are ugly but also hauntingly sad. Salieri simmers with anger, resentment and self-hate. In contrast, Mozart is a divine fool, who effortlessly makes music and lewd jokes, without missing a beat. Purists pointed out factual inaccuracies in the film but I think they are missing the point. *Amadeus* may be part-fiction but its truth is staggering. This is required viewing.

*We both decided that music would be the center of the film and my great pleasure is that Mozart has now reached millions and millions of people who had not heard him before.*

**– Peter Shaffer in his Academy Award Speech for Best Writing in 1984.**

## AWARDS

Nominated for 11 **Academy Awards** and won 8 including Best Actor in a Leading Role (F. Murray Abraham), Best Director (Milos Forman), Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material From another medium (Peter Shaffer) and Best Picture.

Nominated for 9 **BAFTA Awards** including Best Film and won 4 awards in technical categories.

2 **Golden Globes** for Best Director and Best Motion Picture – Drama (1984). F. Murray Abraham and Peter Shaffer also won in their categories.

# AMAR AKBAR ANTHONY (1977)

"You see the whole country of the system is juxtapositioned by the haemoglobin in the atmosphere." Does this line make sense? Neither does the film about three brothers separated in childhood and raised in three different faiths. But Manmohan Desai's cinema wasn't about logic. It was about exuberance, vitality and above all, entertainment. So a blind woman has her eyes restored by beams emanating from a Sai Baba statue and her three sons donate blood to her simultaneously. Desai's unique madness was clearly infectious because Amitabh Bachchan gave one of his finest comic performances in the film. Just remember not to ask too many questions and enjoy this ode to secularism – Bollywood style.

**DIRECTOR**
MANMOHAN DESAI
**STARRING**
VINOD KHANNA, RISHI KAPOOR, AMITABH BACHCHAN
**RUNNING TIME**
184 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
COMEDY, DRAMA

*Amitabh Bachchan recalls hearing the story for the first time: "Manmohan Desai was one of a kind. When he narrated the subject of Amar Akbar Anthony, I was flummoxed. I'd never seen or heard of a guy like Anthony. I laughed out loud, "Man, what kind of a movie are you hatching?" And he retorted, "Look, as soon as it is released, people on the streets will call you Anthonybhai." And he was so right.*

**– Amitabh Bachchan in *To Be or Not to Be: Amitabh Bachchan***

## AWARDS

**Filmfare Award** for Best Actor (Amitabh Bachchan), Best Editor (Kamlakar Karkhanis) and Best Music Director (Laxmikant-Pyarelal) in 1978.

## TRIVIA

According to Desai, the film was inspired by a news item about an alcoholic who regularly beat up his wife. One day, the distraught woman abandons her three small children and disappears. This gave Desai the idea to show each one growing up in a different household – Hindu, Muslim, Christian.

# AMAR PREM (1972)

*Amar Prem* is an overwrought melodrama. Director Shakti Samanta unashamedly yanks at your heartstrings with every tool available. The characters are too good to be true and the acting is somewhat mannered. But if you allow yourself to be swept, this film will engage you with its unconventional romance, its emotion and its magical soundtrack created by R.D. Burman and Anand Bakshi. The songs – *Chingari koi bhadke, Kuch toh log kahenge, Raina beeti jaye* – are absolutely haunting.

*Amar Prem,* a remake of the Bengali film *Nishi Padma,* is about a village woman sold into a brothel, her relationship with her favourite client Anand Babu and with a little boy

**DIRECTOR**
SHAKTI SAMANTA
**STARRING**
RAJESH KHANNA, SHARMILA TAGORE, SUJIT KUMAR
**RUNNING TIME**
156 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
ROMANCE, DRAMA

who lives down the street. She gives herself selflessly to both these men. Anand Babu, played by Rajesh Khanna, is a wonderful character – a smiling alcoholic who brushes off his grief and extols everyone to do the same. He dismisses tears as 'saline water'. Khanna's crinkling eyes and flamboyance only add to Anand Babu's pathos. When he finally weeps at the end, it's likely that you will be crying too.

*When I was offered this film, I immediately agreed since it was a very strong role in the iconic mould of* Mother India. *Maybe today's generation will find it to be full of suffering but I think its selfless quality and the unfulfilled romance touched people's hearts.*

**– Actress Sharmila Tagore to *Indian Express***

## AWARDS

3 **Filmfare Awards** including Best Screenplay (Aravind Mukherjee), Best Dialogue (Ramesh Pant) and Best Sound (Jehangir Nowrojee).

Nominated for Best Actor (Rajesh Khanna).

## TRIVIA

In the Bengali original, the role played by Rajesh Khanna (in the Hindi version) was enacted by iconic Bengali actor Uttam Kumar.

# AMORES PERROS (2000)

*Amores Perros* (Spanish for 'Love's a Bitch'), opens with a car chase, a dog bleeding to death from a bullet wound in the back seat of the car being chased and inevitably, a horrific crash. The crash is where three separate stories converge. Each is a searing portrait of heartbreak, tragedy and family ties. Dogs also play a central role in each story. The first, which for me was also the most powerful, includes scenes of dog fights that are so graphically brutal that it will turn your stomach (though Iñárritu does include a disclaimer that says no dogs were harmed during the making of the film).

The film, written by Guillermo Arriaga, is almost like a novel with its dense story-telling and characters. With its multiple storylines that circle on each other, it also draws comparison to Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. The violence is as startling but there is little humour here. Instead *Amores Perros* is rich in emotion and texture. The film moves seamlessly from the high-rises to the shanties of Mexico City. It has a depth and sadness that permeates each frame. *Amores Perros* won laurels worldwide and established Iñárritu as a sought-after director in Hollywood. After the film's release Sean Penn called to congratulate him. When he said, "Hi, this is Sean Penn," Iñárritu laughed and replied, "Sure and I'm Marlon Brando." The two went on to make *21 Grams* together.

**DIRECTOR**
ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU

**STARRING**
EMILIO ECHEVARRÍA, GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL, GOYA TOLEDO

**RUNNING TIME**
154 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
MEXICO

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
SPANISH

**GENRE**
DRAMA

## TRIVIA

The dogs in this film wore plastic muzzles during the shoot. The ones that appear dead and bloodied were made up and drugged for 20 minutes at a time.

*I wanted to make a film about Mexico City, where there are millions of dogs. The dogfight is a cruel reality. But more than the fights, we were interested in the relations between dogs and people.*

**– Alejandro González Iñárritu in *The Guardian***

## AWARDS

**BAFTA** Award for Best Film Not in the English Language.

Nominated for the **Academy Award** for Best Foreign Language Film.

Prize of the Critic's Week at the 2000 **Cannes Film Festival**.

The Grand Prix of the **Belgian Syndicate of Cinema Critics**.

# ANAND (1971)

**DIRECTOR**
HRISHIKESH MUKHERJEE
**STARRING**
RAJESH KHANNA,
AMITABH BACHCHAN,
SUMITA SANYAL
**RUNNING TIME**
122 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
DRAMA

**TRIVIA**

The shooting for this film was completed in exactly 20 days.

*Zindagi badi honi chaiye, lambi nahin.* That's the lesson Anand, a cancer patient, gives us in this three-hankie weepie. Anand, played by an exuberant Rajesh Khanna, is dying of lymphosarcoma of the intestine. But this is a man so vibrantly alive that he can find the courage to laugh at his disease – he says it sounds like a viceroy's name. Anand knows that he's going to die so he lives each moment greedily, hungrily, and fully.

Mukherjee, who co-wrote the story and screenplay, created a memorable film with moments that are guaranteed to make even the hardest heart weep. I don't know another death in Hindi cinema (perhaps with the exception of Jai in *Sholay*) that is as heartbreaking as Anand's. As Anand struggles, his friend, Dr Bhaskar played by Amitabh Bachchan, runs out in desperation to find a remedy. When Bhaskar returns, Anand is dead but the tape recorder is playing the dialogue that the two recorded earlier. Anand says: *Zindagi aur maut uparwale ke haath hai, jahanpanah. Hum sab toh rangmanch ki kathputliyan hain jinki dor uparwale ki ungliyon main bandhi hai. Kab kaun kaise uthega yeh koi nahin bata sakta. Ha, Ha, Ha.* The songs – gems like *Kahin door* and *Zindagi kaisi hai paheli* – added to the quiet melancholy of this film. In death, Anand teaches us how to live.

*I loved Raj Kapoor very much and he called me 'Babu Moshai'. I was so attached to him that I used to wonder what I'd do without him. I had a friend, Mathew, who had introduced me to Epicurean philosophy. Stuff like 'Why is one unhappy? Because of fear'. The worst fear is fear of death. The one who is dying doesn't care but others became anxious. That's how Anand is born.*

**– Hrishikesh Mukherjee in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema***

## AWARDS

6 **Filmfare Awards** in 1972 for Best Film (Hrishikesh Mukherjee, NC Sippy), Best Story, Best Editor (Hrishikesh Mukherjee), Best Dialogue (Gulzar), Best Actor (Rajesh Khanna) and Best Supporting Actor (Amitabh Bachchan).

# ANDAZ (1949)

**DIRECTOR**
MEHBOOB KHAN

**STARRING**
RAJ KAPOOR, DILIP KUMAR, NARGIS

**RUNNING TIME**
148 MINUTES

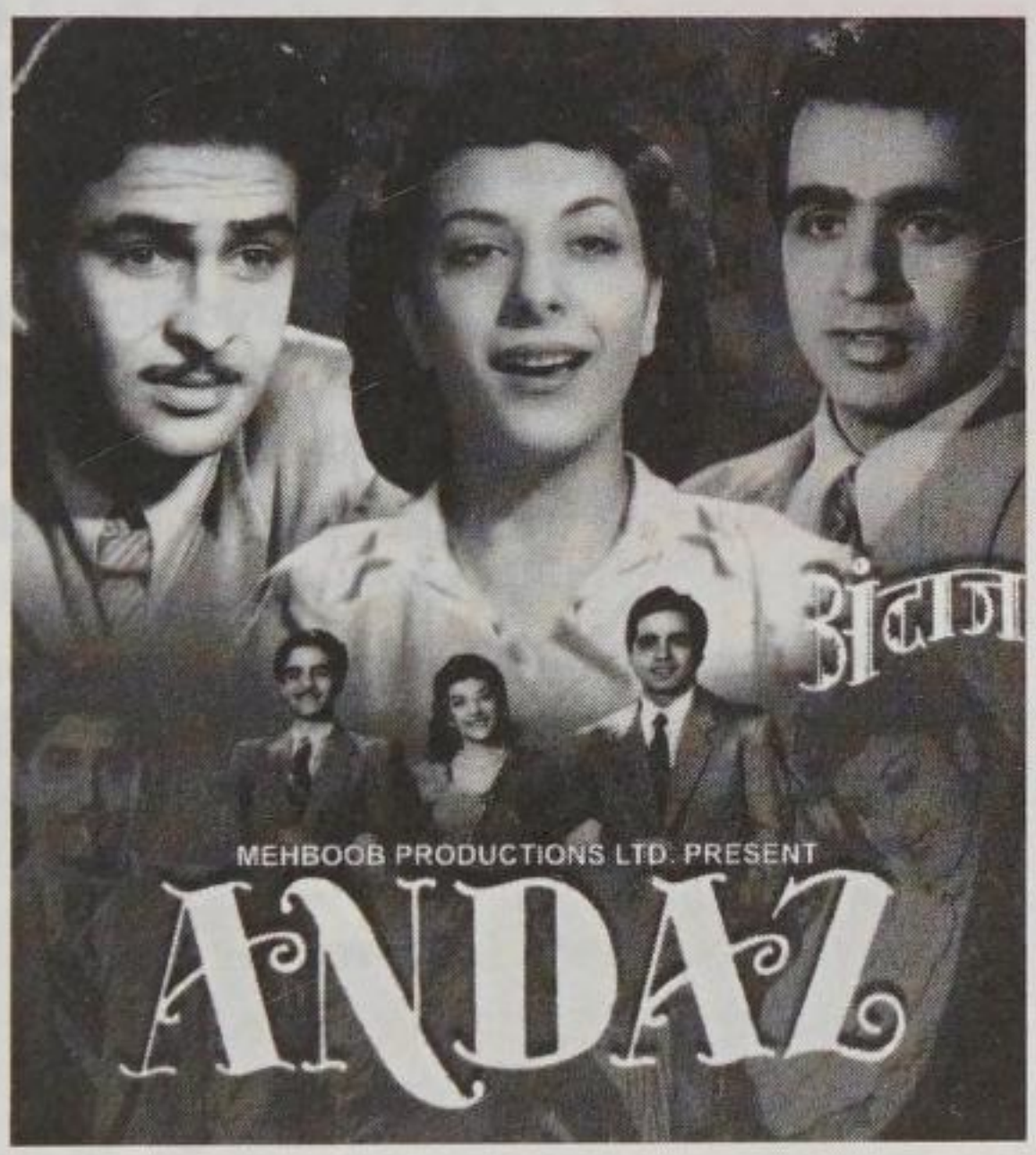
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI

**GENRE**
DRAMA

There is much in *Andaz* that has become problematic with time. To begin with, there's the world view that a woman who follows Western mores can only meet a tragic end – at one point, a character pointedly remarks: *Shaadi kar lijye ya dosti. Desi harmonium par vilayati raag nahin baj sakte.* The songs, though beautifully composed by Naushad, are too frequent. And the plot hits the high notes of melodrama.

And yet, this is a film worth revisiting because triangles in Hindi cinema and every debate on platonic relationships – from *Dil To Pagal Hai* to *Ek Main aur Ekk Tu* – originates here. Nargis as Nina, the flamboyant, feisty heroine, is wonderful. Here is a woman who can share a deep and abiding friendship with a man who is not her lover. Her world falls apart because both her friend and her husband mistake her affection for love. There is also great pleasure in watching Dilip Kumar (as the friend) face off with Raj Kapoor (as the husband). *Andaz* is both regressive and path-breaking, an intriguing combination.




*Contrary to popular perception, Baba didn't denounce friendship between a man and a woman. He only wanted to convey that such a relationship was not pragmatic in the Indian society of the time.*

**– Iqbal Khan, son of director Mehboob Khan, in *The Legends of Indian Cinema: Mehboob Khan***

**TRIVIA**

This is the only film in which Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar acted together.

# ANNIE HALL (1977)

**DIRECTOR**
WOODY ALLEN
**STARRING**
WOODY ALLEN, DIANE KEATON, PAUL SIMON
**RUNNING TIME**
93 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
ROMANTIC COMEDY

**TRIVIA**

The movie's working title was 'Anhedonia', which means the clinical inability to experience happiness.

*Annie Hall* is one of my favourite love stories. The romance between Alvy Singer, the nerdy, neurotic stand-up comic played by Woody Allen and Annie Hall, the gorgeous, eccentric, ditzy singer played by Diane Keaton has such humour, affection and insight, that every exchange still rings true – from the initial awkwardness to the flush of love to the sad but inevitable separation. It would be hard to find another romance that makes you laugh out loud and also ache so much.

Everything about *Annie Hall* sparkles. The writing by Allen and Marshall Brickman is witty, urbane with just the right hint of mournful; the performances don't feel like performances at all; and the direction is audacious – Allen works with subtitles, split-screens, animation, direct-to-camera monologues. My favourite moment: when Alvy pulls out the real Marshall McLuhan (an acclaimed media and communications guru) to put down an annoying blowhard intellectual who is loudly espousing McLuhan's theories while standing behind Alvy in a movie line. Truly, they don't make them like this anymore.

*Most people assumed Annie Hall was the story of our relationship. My last name is Hall. Woody and I did share a significant romance, according to me, anyway. I did want to be a singer. I was insecure, and I did grope for words. After 35 years, does anybody care? What matters is Woody's body of work. Annie Hall was his first love story. Love was the glue that held those witty vignettes together. However bittersweet, the message was clear: Love fades. Woody took a risk; he let the audience feel the sadness of goodbye in a funny movie.*

**– Diane Keaton in her memoir, *Then Again***

## AWARDS

4 **Academy Awards** for Best Picture, Best Director (Woody Allen), Best Actress in a Leading Role (Diane Keaton), Best Original Screenplay (Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman). Also nominated as Best Actor in a Leading Role (Woody Allen).

5 **BAFTA Film Awards** for Best Film, Best Screenplay (Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman), Best Direction (Woody Allen), Best Actress (Diane Keaton) and Best Editing (Ralph Rosenblum, Wendy Greene Bricmont) and Woody Allen was nominated for Best Actor as well.

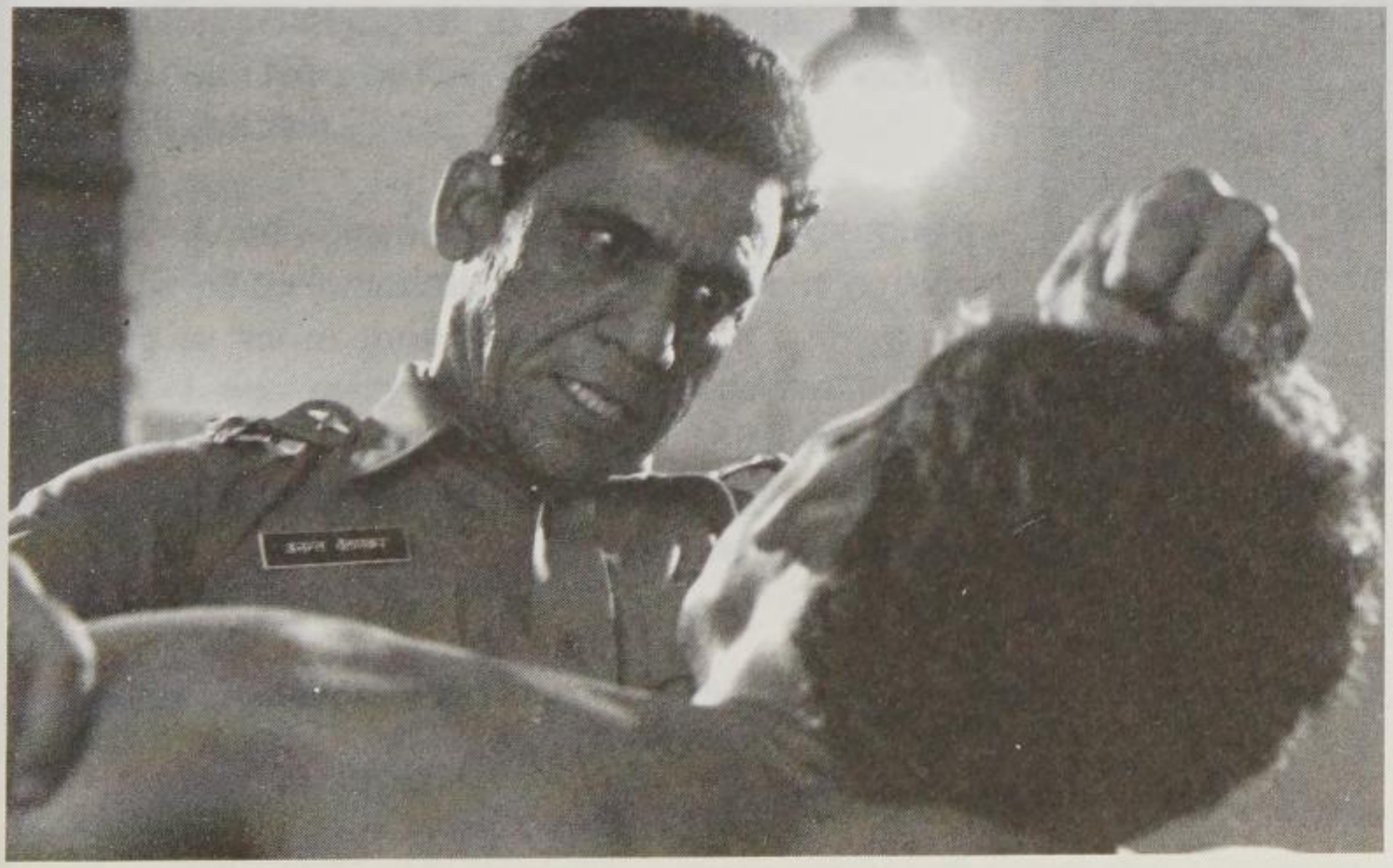
The **Golden Globe** for Best Film Actress in a Musical/Comedy (Diane Keaton). Also nominated in 3 other categories.

# ARDH SATYA (1983)

Anant Welankar, played by Om Puri, is one of Hindi cinema's landmark cops. He is the art-house counterpart to Vijay in Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer*. His impact was just as powerful and far-reaching. But his story was far more tragic because it was inevitable and a happy or even decent end, wasn't a remote possibility. Welankar is a reluctant cop – he joins because his harsh, abusive father pushes him into it – but once in the force, he tries to conduct himself with honesty and dignity. Welankar's tragedy is that there is little value placed on honesty. Welankar becomes mired in a quicksand of police corruption and brutality. When he beats a prisoner to death during interrogation, he is forced to ask the notorious criminal Rama Shetty (played brilliantly by Sadashiv Amrapurkar) for help.

Working from a script by Vijay Tendulkar, Govind Nihalani created a film that hits you like a blow to the gut. *Ardh Satya* became that rare thing – an art-house film that ran to full houses for ten weeks in Mumbai. In fact, it was so successful that the honest-cop-brutalized-by-the-system formula was co-opted by mainstream cinema. But few films could match the anger and intensity of *Ardh Satya*.

**DIRECTOR**
GOVIND NIHALANI
**STARRING**
OM PURI, SMITA PATIL, SADASHIV AMRAPURKAR
**RUNNING TIME**
130 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
CRIME, DRAMA



*I was delighted to read the script Nihalani gave me, and the fact that he wanted me to play the lead character, sub-inspector Anant Welankar. The film was based on a short story written by a customs officer, and was based on his experiences. That lent the film the authenticity that was much spoken about after its release.* Ardh Satya *was the film that changed my fate.*

**– Om Puri in *Daily News & Analysis***

## AWARDS

**The National Film Award** for Best Actor (Om Puri) in 1984.

5 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Director (Govind Nihalani), Best Film, Best Screenplay (Vijay Tendulkar), Best Story (D.A. Panvalkar) and Best Supporting Actor (Sadashiv Amrapurkar).

## TRIVIA

Director Govind Nihalani filmed two endings to the film, one his own and one according to the script. He asked writer Vijay Tendulkar to pick which one was better and he ended up choosing the director's vision.

# ARTH (1982)

More than three decades ago, Mahesh Bhatt and Shabana Azmi created a credible, textured, heart-felt female character – Pooja Malhotra. Pooja is an ordinary housewife, content with decorating her new home, until her husband reveals to her that he is in love with another woman. The crisis first pushes her to the bottom – at a party, she drunkenly confronts her husband and his lover – but slowly she gets back on her feet and learns to stand alone. In the wonderfully done climactic scene, she refuses to accept her husband back, and says goodbye with a quiet dignity (this was considered so radical at the time that distributors refused to buy the film).

Pooja's journey still has the power to move you. Parts of *Arth* have ripened badly – the portrayal of the 'other woman' Kavita Sanyal, who is mentally imbalanced, is over the top (in one scene, Smita Patil echoes Lady Macbeth, haunted by the marriage she wrecked). And you will have to keep a straight face as Om Shivpuri, playing Kavita's psychiatrist, explains that she suffers from a 'persecution complex'. But the strong story-telling camouflages the soft spots. Look out for Raj Kiran playing Pooja's supportive admirer, Kiran Vairale as Pooja's tough hostel roommate and Rohini Hattangadi as her maid. Jagjit-Chitra's *ghazals* (with lyrics by Kaifi Azmi) are an added incentive to watch this film.

*Suddenly I had women walk into my house expecting me to resolve all their marital problems. They were no longer reacting to me as fans to a star, but as a sister, as a woman. I was overwhelmed and I was really scared because I had not really given it a moment's thought and then I realized that in fact I am being put in a position of great responsibility.*

**– Shabana Azmi in an interview to Asia Society.**

**DIRECTOR**
MAHESH BHATT

**STARRING**
SHABANA AZMI, SMITA PATIL, KULBHUSHAN KHARBANDA

**RUNNING TIME**
138 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI

**GENRE**
DRAMA

## TRIVIA

The film was semi-autobiographical. Director Mahesh Bhatt based it on his relationship with actress Parveen Babi.

## AWARDS

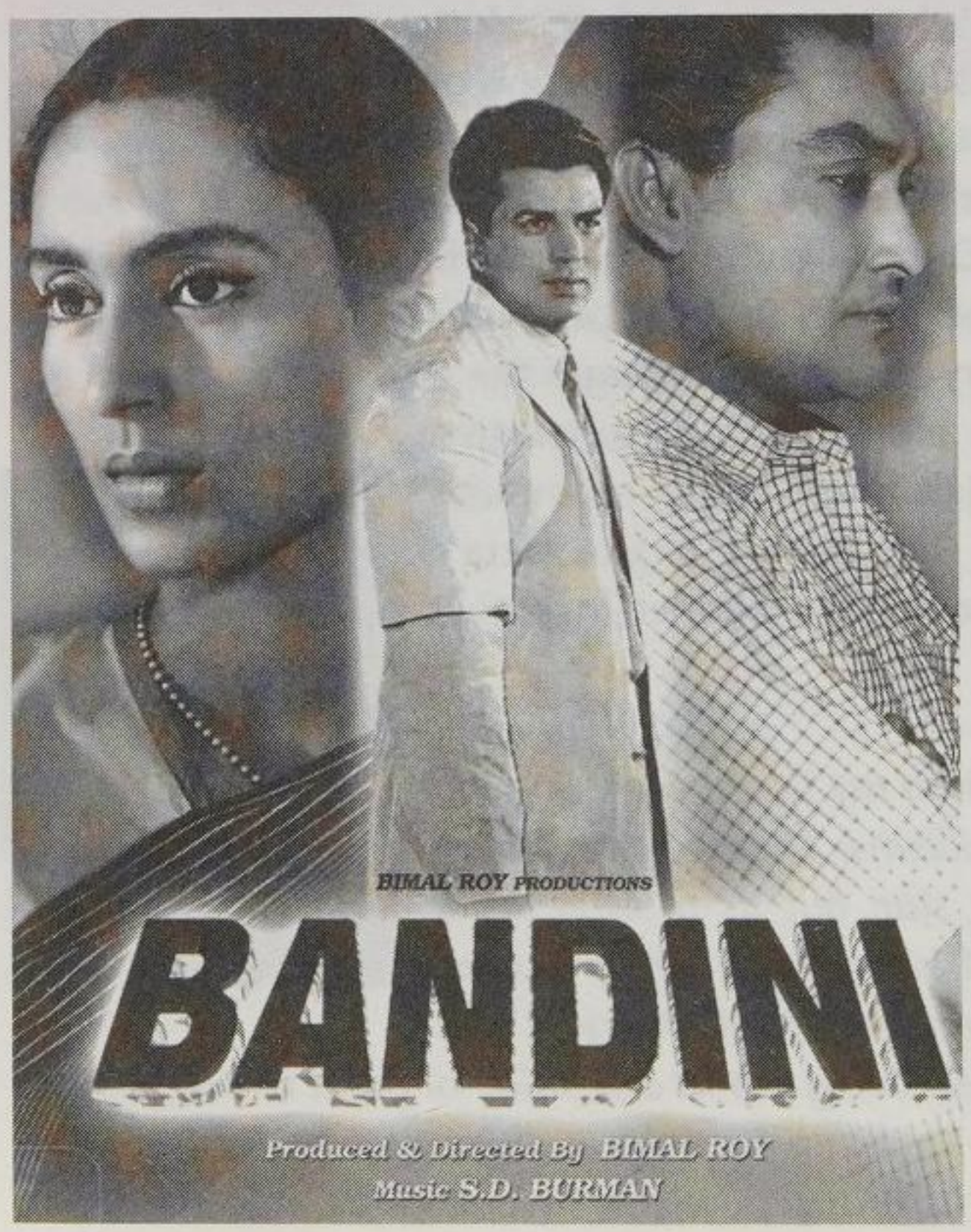
The film won 3 **Filmfare awards** for Best Actress (Shabana Azmi), Best Screenplay (Mahesh Bhatt), and Best Supporting Actress (Rohini Hattangadi) in 1984.

**National Award** for Best Actress (Shabana Azmi), 1983.

# BANDINI (1963)

**DIRECTOR**
BIMAL ROY
**STARRING**
NUTAN, ASHOK KUMAR, DHARMENDRA
**RUNNING TIME**
157 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
DRAMA, ROMANCE

*Bandini* features one of Hindi cinema's most complex and fully realized female characters. Kalyani, played by Nutan, is a woman who can kill – she poisons the wife of the man she loves. But Kalyani is also unfailingly virtuous, selfless and possesses a real strength of character. She defies her circumstances and follows her heart, even though her choices seem unwise. Nutan was coaxed out of semi-retirement to do this role and she played Kalyani with remarkable dignity and grace. The men – Ashok Kumar and a robustly handsome Dharmendra – matched her understated notes. Together, they created a memorable love triangle.




This unique story, much of which takes place in a rather unromantic jail, was told with consummate skill by Bimal Roy. He underplayed the pathos and melodrama, except in one key scene, in which Kalyani commits murder. The welder's incessant hammering underlines the enormity of her actions. *Bandini* also features a hauntingly beautiful sound-track, which includes S.D. Burman classics like *Mora Gora Ang Lai Le, Ab Ke Baras* and *O Jaanewaale.* And if you pause to look at the credits, you might notice the following assistants: R.D. Burman and Gulzar.

*One character that I rate very highly is the one played by Nutan in* Bandini. *I like the role because there was a lot of strength in the character and Nutan portrayed it with an intensity that is hers alone. I think such a character has never been portrayed since then and never will be.*

**– Director Kunal Kohli to *Tehelka***

## AWARDS

6 **Filmfare awards** for Best Film, Best Director (Bimal Roy), Best Actress (Nutan), Best Cinematographer – Black and White (Kamal Bose), Best Story (Jarasandha) and Best Sound Recordist (D Bilimoria)

## TRIVIA

Gulzar wrote his first song, *Mora Gora Ang Lai Le,* for this film.

# BANDIT QUEEN (1994)

**DIRECTOR**
SHEKHAR KAPUR

**STARRING**
SEEMA BISWAS, NIRMAL PANDEY, GOVIND NAMDEO

**RUNNING TIME**
119 MINUTES

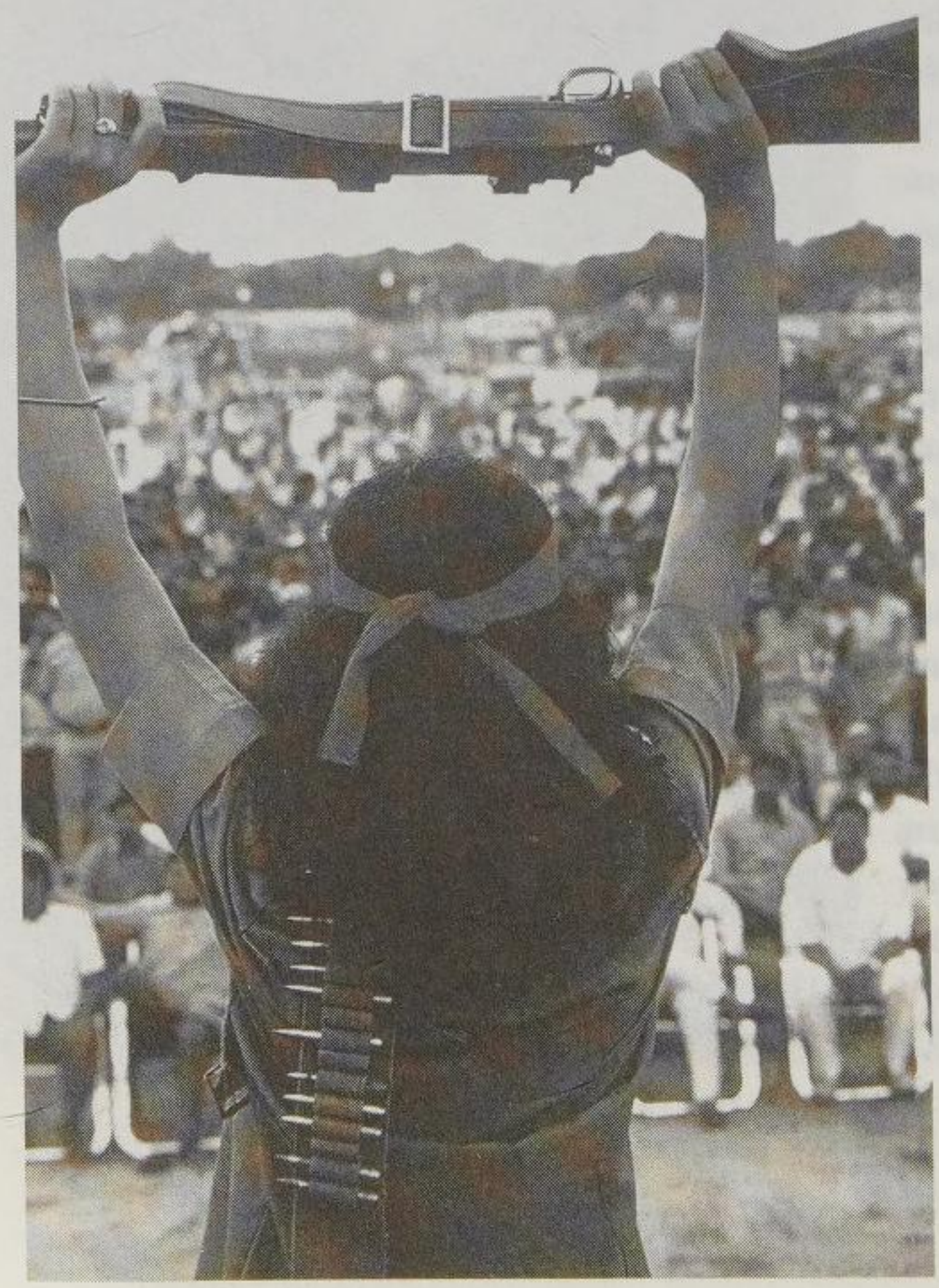
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI

**GENRE**
BIOGRAPHY, DRAMA

*Bandit Queen* created such an uproar when it was first released that it was impossible to separate the film from the noise – the censor board, women's organizations, Arundhati Roy and eventually even Phoolan Devi herself jumped into the fray, first denouncing and then supporting the film. But all the sound and fury couldn't distract from the fact that *Bandit Queen* was so gut wrenching that its images stayed embedded in your brain – a door that swings open and shut as more men come in to rape Phoolan Devi haunted me for years.

This is not easy viewing – not just because the brutality is so graphic but because it indicts all of us. We are all somehow complicit in the fate of this woman who was married to a much older man when she was only 11 and then relentlessly abused by men in power – from her husband to cops to higher-castes to bandits. So the first time she is with a man she loves, she can't decide if she wants to make love or hit him.



Shekhar Kapur, assisted by an array of incredible talents – from lead Seema Biswas to editor Renu Saluja to composer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan – told a tough story with skill and compassion. It is truly Bollywood's loss that after *Bandit Queen*, nobody quite figured out what to do with an actor as remarkable as Biswas.

*I always say* Bandit Queen *is my most honest film in that I just did not allow anything to come between the 'moment' and the film. The ravines of Chambal spoke to me constantly and being and living in the harsh environment itself forced an act of adventure that became both challenging and exciting. It was guerrilla film making at its most adventurous.*

**–Shekhar Kapur on his blog**

## AWARDS

Seema Biswas won the **National Award** in 1996 for Best Actress.

The film won the Critics Award for Best Movie at the **Filmfare Awards** in 1995 and won the Best Director (Shekhar Kapur) and Best Cinematographer (Ashok Mehta) in 1997.

## TRIVIA

Before he became a director, Tigmanshu Dhulia was the casting director of *Bandit Queen*. Dhulia went back to Chambal for his film *Paan Singh Tomar* which was released in 2012 to great acclaim. He hired the same ex-dacoits that featured in *Bandit Queen* as security guards for the crew while shooting *Paan Singh Tomar*.

# BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN (1925)

**DIRECTOR**
SERGEI EISENSTEIN

**STARRING**
ALEKSANDR ANTONOV, VLADIMIR BARSKY, GRIGORI ALEKSANDROV

**RUNNING TIME**
69 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
SOVIET UNION

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
RUSSIAN (INTERTITLES)

**GENRE**
HISTORY, DRAMA

Since *The Artist* has brought silent movies back into focus, it seems like a good time to revisit Sergei Eisenstein's classic *Battleship Potemkin*. The film was made more than eight decades ago but it still retains its dramatic power – especially the iconic Odessa Steps episode, arguably the most famous sequence in cinema.

The movie is based on a true story of sailors on an armoured cruiser, who revolted after being served meat crawling with maggots. The ship's doctor takes a look and tells the angry men: "Those are not worms. Those are only maggots. Wash them out with brine. It's good meat."

Eisenstein wasn't attempting to create textured characters or an emotional arc here – the actors play types in a simplistic morality play in which the good people stand up against the evil czarist troops. But the battle has heft and tension. No matter how many times you've seen the original or references to it (in films like Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables* and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*), when the pram with the wailing baby goes down the Odessa Steps, you still gasp in horror.

The sequence was so effective that it turned fiction into historical fact – it is widely believed that there was a massacre when actually no such event took place. Eisenstein's film helped to create the grammar of cinema and its power endures.

*The best film in the world.*
**– Charlie Chaplin**

## TRIVIA

The film was considered Communist propaganda and was banned in Britain. In Russia, Stalin suppressed it as mutiny in the Soviet armed forces was not to be encouraged.

# BELLE DE JOUR (1967)

*Belle de Jour* is the strange, sad and sexy story of an upper class Parisian housewife who works part-time in a brothel. She's only there in the afternoons and hence is named Belle de Jour. The work both fascinates and repels her. She refuses the affection of her somewhat bland physician husband but willingly sleeps with a gangster. Even when she's with her husband, she is lost in masochistic fantasies, including one in which mud and dirt is thrown at her. Why does she do this? Buñuel gives us tantalizing hints but no explanations.

*Belle de Jour* is erotic without being sexually explicit. At its centre, is the porcelain beauty of Catherine Deneuve who

**DIRECTOR**
LUIS BUÑUEL

**STARRING**
CATHERINE DENEUVE, JEAN SOREL, MICHEL PICCOLI

**RUNNING TIME**
101 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
FRANCE/ITALY

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
FRENCH, SPANISH

**GENRE**
DRAMA

hides much more than she reveals. She remains mysterious and unknowable until the end. Years later, Deneuve told an interviewer that she was 'very unhappy' when the film was being made because "there were moments when I felt totally used." But *Belle de Jour* became one of her most iconic roles. It was also Buñuel's biggest commercial success. There were as many interpretations of the film as there were viewers. Whenever Buñuel was asked to confirm a certain version of what the film meant, he only replied: "Very good, that is your *Belle de Jour.*"

Belle de Jour *was my biggest commercial success, which I attribute more to the marvellous whores than to my direction.*

**– Director Buñuel in his biography *My Last Sigh***

## AWARDS

The **Golden Lion** and **Pasinetti Award** (Luis Buñuel) in 1967 at the **Venice Film Festival**

Nominated for a **BAFTA Award** in 1969 for Best Actress (Catherine Deneuve)

## TRIVIA

Buñuel adapted the story from Joseph Kessel's 1928 novel of the same name.

# BICYCLE THIEVES/THE BICYCLE THIEF (1948)

*Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief* is considered one of the greatest films of all time. The story is slender: a man, who desperately needs his job as a poster-hanger has his bicycle stolen. Without a bicycle, he loses his job. So he embarks on a desperate search for his bicycle in Rome. Of course, he cannot find it. Hopelessly frustrated and overwhelmed, he attempts to steal a bicycle himself.

Vittorio De Sica's simple film carries the emotional weight of great tragedy. It also set the palette for one of India's finest films. In 1950, Satyajit Ray travelled to London, where he saw *Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief*. Afterwards he wrote: "I knew immediately that if I ever made *Pather Panchali*, I would make it in the same way, using natural locations and unknown actors. All through my stay in London, the lessons of *Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief* and neo-realist cinema stayed with me."

**DIRECTOR**
VITTORIO DE SICA

**STARRING**
LAMBERTO MAGGIORANI, ENZO STAIOLA, LIANELLA CARELL

**RUNNING TIME**
87 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
ITALY

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ITALIAN

**GENRE**
DRAMA

**TRIVIA**

Both Lamberto Maggiorani and Enzo Staiola never acted before this film.

*It is not the actor who lends the character a face, but the character who reveals himself. The man in the street, particularly if he is directed by someone who is himself an actor, is raw material that can be moulded at will.*

**– Vittorio De Sica in his essay *How I Direct My Films***

## AWARDS

The Honorary **Academy Award** for Best Foreign film released in 1949 in the USA.

Also nominated for the **Academy Award** for Best Screenplay in 1950.

The Best Film from any Source award at the **BAFTA Awards**.

The Best Foreign Film award at the **Golden Globes** in 1950.

# BONNIE AND CLYDE (1967)

**DIRECTOR**
ARTHUR PENN
**STARRING**
WARREN BEATTY, FAYE DUNAWAY, GENE HACKMAN
**RUNNING TIME**
112 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
BIOGRAPHY, CRIME, DRAMA

I wonder if it is an exaggeration to say that most of the violence you see on screen today can be traced back to *Bonnie and Clyde*. Arthur Penn's story about two bank robbers who got famous killing people during the early Depression years, was savage, shocking and tragic (the film's tagline said: They're young. They are in love. And they kill people.). Of course, Bonnie and Clyde were going to die but the climactic, slow-motion dance of death in which the two are riddled with bullets, was both horrific and seductive. Film critic David Thomson called the ending 'orgasmic'. He wrote: Had there ever been a moment in which the equation of sex and violence was so emphatic or transporting?

*Bonnie and Clyde* is widely credited with bringing a European sensibility to American cinema (in fact the film was first pitched to François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard). But its graphic violence, subversive shifts of mood and pitiless tone was bewildering for studio bosses and some film critics – Bosley Crowther, the influential critic of *The New York Times*, described the film as 'a cheap piece of bald-faced slapstick comedy'. But eventually *Bonnie and Clyde* found its audience and its rightful place in film history (it also won 10 Oscar nominations). A few months after the film's release, Crowther was retired from the paper.

*When an American movie is contemporary in feeling, like this one, it makes a different kind of contact with an American audience from the kind that is made by European films, however contemporary.*

**– Pauline Kael in *The New Yorker***

**TRIVIA**

When the film premiered triumphantly in Paris, Faye Dunaway received a box full of berets from the inhabitants of a small village near the Pyrenees that specialized in making them. Thanks to the film, the demand for berets had risen from 5,000 to 12,000 a week.

## AWARDS

Nominated for 10 **Academy Awards** including Best Picture, Best Director and 5 acting nominations. Won Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Estelle Parsons) and Best Cinematography (Burnett Guffey) in 1968.

Most Promising Newcomer (Michael J Pollard & Faye Dunaway) in Leading Film Roles at the **BAFTA Awards** in 1968 .

# BOOGIE NIGHTS (1997)

Can the lives of a few fractured people who work in the pornography business be the stuff of art? Yes, if the director is Paul Thomas Anderson, who was only 26 when he made the film. *Boogie Nights* is set in the adult entertainment business and moves from the late 1970s, when X-rated films showed in theatres and had a certain innocence and artistry, to the early 1980s, when video and cocaine decimated the business.

A group of damaged individuals function as a dysfunctional family – from the paternal producer Jack Horner (one of Burt Reynolds' best performances) to the mother figure, played by a tragically fragile Julianne Moore to the star son – Eddie, played by Mark Wahlberg, who is fantastically endowed. "Everyone is blessed with one special thing," he says.

Anderson tells the story of their rise and fall with great tenderness and skill. So Horner's ambition to make a porn film that is 'true and right and dramatic' is curiously touching.

As is the plight of a film technician whose wife sleeps with any man she can find, anywhere (including the driveway). The sex in the film isn't titillating – it's matter of fact – just another product created with hard work and hard decisions. *Boogie Nights* feels desperately sad and alive and true. Don't be dissuaded by the subject matter. This is a wonderful film.

*I'd promised myself I'd never sing, dance or appear in my underwear in a movie, and I do all those things in the first 30 minutes of* Boogie Nights.

**– Mark Wahlberg to *Los Angeles Times***

**DIRECTOR**
PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON

**STARRING**
MARK WAHLBERG, BURT REYNOLDS, JULIANNE MOORE

**RUNNING TIME**
155 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH

**GENRE**
DRAMA

## TRIVIA

Anderson wanted either Mark Wahlberg or Leonardo DiCaprio as Dirk Diggler after seeing them both in *The Basketball Diaries*. DiCaprio chose to do *Titanic*. Anderson made sure Wahlberg knew when they met that he wanted him for his acting talent, not his underwear ad look.

## AWARDS

Nominated for 3 **Academy Awards** for Best Supporting Actor (Burt Reynolds), Best Supporting Actress (Julianne Moore) and Best Writing, Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen (Paul Thomas Anderson).

The **Golden Globe** for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture in 1998 (Burt Reynolds)

Also nominated for the **BAFTA** for Best Screenplay - Original (Paul Thomas Anderson).

# BORAT (2006)

**DIRECTOR**
LARRY CHARLES
**STARRING**
SACHA BARON COHEN
**RUNNING TIME**
84 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY

In the words of *The Guardian* film critic Peter Bradshaw, *Borat* is a film "so breathtakingly offensive, so suicidally discourteous that strictly speaking it shouldn't be legal at all." Which means that if you are squeamish about vulgarity (which includes several minutes of two naked, hairy men fighting), politically incorrect jokes (which includes making fun of a mentally challenged family member) and general gross-out material (which includes faeces in a plastic bag), do not go anywhere near this film. Sacha Baron Cohen's mockumentry respects no boundaries. But it is a brilliant and cruel satire that will have you laughing till your insides hurt.

Cohen plays Borat, a racist, bigoted, superbly dim television reporter from Kazakhstan (where his sister is the number four prostitute) who comes to the 'US and A' to make a show for his country. He falls in love with Pamela Anderson and then crosses the country in an ice-cream bus so he can marry her. Cohen is of course acting but most of the people he interacts with aren't. What you get is a scary slice of America. This film is ultimate proof that truth is stranger than fiction.

*Borat essentially works as a tool, by himself being anti-semitic, he lets people lower their guard and expose their own prejudice, whether it's anti-semitism or an acceptance of anti-semitism.*

**– Sacha Baron Cohen to *Rolling Stone* magazine**

## AWARDS

Nominated for an **Academy Award** for Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay (Sacha Baron Cohen, Todd Phillips, Anthony Hines, Peter Baynham and Dan Mazer).

The **Golden Globe** for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical (Sacha Baron Cohen) and nominated for the Best Motion Picture - Comedy or Musical in 2007.

## TRIVIA

The Kazakh authorities banned the film and threatened to sue the comedian after its release in 2006. But later Kazakhstan's foreign minister said he is 'grateful' to Borat for 'helping attract tourists' to the country.

# BRAZIL (1985)

In a conversation with Salman Rushdie at the 2002 Telluride Film Festival, Terry Gilliam said that he never wanted to make 'naturalistic films'. "I've always liked the idea that film is an artifice and that this is admitted right from the start. So we create a world that isn't true to a realistic, naturalistic world but is truthful." One of Gilliam's most compelling worlds is *Brazil,* about an Orwell-inspired, inherently insane, crushingly bureaucratic, totalitarian society, in which everything requires enough paperwork to drown a man. A mild-mannered bureaucrat escapes his daily grind through fantasy, which leads him to fall in love, which of course leads to all hell breaking loose.

Co-written by playwright Tom Stoppard, *Brazil* is wickedly funny – when a minister is asked why the government has been unable to stop terrorists for 13 years, the minister replies: 'beginner's luck'. But it's also relentlessly bleak. So dark in fact that Universal Studios refused to release it until Gilliam changed the end. So Gilliam, much like the 'rogue plumber' played by Robert De Niro, conducted a guerilla campaign showing the film to the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, which voted it best film of the year. Eventually the studio was forced to buckle down. *Brazil* is over-wrought, psychedelic and fundamentally mad. Which is why it must be seen.

**DIRECTOR**
TERRY GILLIAM
**STARRING**
ROBERT DE NIRO,
JONATHAN PRYCE,
KATHERINE HELMOND
**RUNNING TIME**
132 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
UNITED KINGDOM
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
FANTASY, SCIENCE FICTION

*The original title of* Brazil *was 1984 1/2. Fellini was one of my great gods and it was 1984.*
**– Terry Gilliam in an interview with Salman Rushdie for *Believer* magazine**

## AWARDS

Nominated for 2 **Academy Awards** for Best Art Direction and Best Screenplay in 1986

2 **BAFTA Film Awards** for Best Production Design and Best Special Visual Effects in 1986.

## TRIVIA

Actor Robert De Niro actually went to see brain surgery operations for his small part in the film as director Terry Gilliam had given him the note that 'he was a plumber but really more like a brain surgeon'.

# BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S (1961)

**DIRECTOR**
BLAKE EDWARDS
**STARRING**
AUDREY HEPBURN, GEORGE PEPPARD, MICKEY ROONEY
**RUNNING TIME**
115 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA, COMEDY, ROMANCE

**TRIVIA**

This was the first time that Tiffany's opened its door to a movie company. Forty guards and sales staff kept an eye on the jewels during the film shoot.

*Breakfast at Tiffany's* is the ultimate escapist fantasy. The story is sordid – a young man and woman in New York live off of rich benefactors. She euphemistically calls it money 'for the powder room'. In a 1968 *Playboy* interview, Truman Capote, whose novella the film was based on, described her as 'not precisely a call girl,' but an 'authentic American geisha.' And yet, as portrayed by Audrey Hepburn, Holly Golightly is an impossibly elegant, irresistible pixie who is so charming that you really can't find fault with anything – including her unapologetic gold-digging schemes to marry rich men. As her agent famously puts it in the film: She is a phony. But... she isn't a phony because she's a real phony.

Admirers of Capote's dark novella and some critics were scathing about director Blake Edwards' more sunny and sexless take on the story. But *Breakfast at Tiffany's,* with its stunning Givenchy costumes, Henry Mancini's score and of course Hepburn, became an iconic film. Interestingly, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* has an India connection – in 2007, Christie's auctioned the little black dress that Holly Golightly wore in the film for $900,000. The proceeds went to the City of Joy charity founded by Dominique Lapierre for poor children in India.

*I didn't think I was right for it. I have to operate entirely on instinct. It was Blake Edwards who finally persuaded me. He is perfectly cast as a director, and I discovered his approach emphasizes the same sort of spontaneity as my own.*

**– Audrey Hepburn to *The New York Times***

## AWARDS

Nominated for 5 **Academy Award**s. It won for Best Original Song, 'Moon River' music by Henry Mancini and lyrics by Johnny Mercer and Best Music (Henry Mancini).

Also nominated for Best Art Direction - Colour, Best Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (George Axelrod) and Best Actress in a Leading Role (Audrey Hepburn) in 1962.

Also nominated for 2 **Golden Globes** for Best Motion Picture – Comedy and Best Motion Picture Actress – Musical/Comedy (Audrey Hepburn).

Henry Mancini won 5 **Grammy Awards** for the musical score including Best Record of the Year and Best Song of the Year for 'Moon River'.

# BREATHLESS (1960)

About half way through *Breathless,* a famous author is being interviewed by several journalists. One asks him what his ambition is. He replies, "To become immortal and then to die." Though Jean-Luc Godard continued to make movies for decades, he achieved immortality with his first film. *Breathless,* with its casual dismissal of traditional narrative modes, characterization and plot, was so new and shocking that it has been labelled a cinematic revolution. Roger Ebert's review started with the sentence: Modern movies begin here.

What's miraculous is that the film still feels new. The doomed romance between a murderer and a beautiful American girl who eventually betrays him, the frantic pace of Paris, the lack of moral compunctions, the seemingly aimless dialogue (Why are you unhappy? Because I'm unhappy. That's silly) and the jerky editing pattern is still startling. *Breathless* was one of the key films of the French New Wave – the original story was by François Truffaut and Claude Chabrol was the production designer. In the Criterion essay on the film, John Powers writes: "To see it is to become different." I think so.

**DIRECTOR**
JEAN-LUC GODARD
**STARRING**
JEAN-PAUL BELMONDO, JEAN SEBERG
**RUNNING TIME**
90 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
FRANCE
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
FRENCH, ENGLISH
**GENRE**
CRIME, DRAMA

Breathless *was the sort of film where anything goes: that was what it was all about.*

**– Jean-Luc Godard in the book *Godard on Godard***

## AWARDS

The Best Director award at the **Berlin International Film Festival** In 1960.

Nominated for a **BAFTA Award** for Best Foreign Actress (Jean Seberg) in 1962.

## TRIVIA

François Truffaut got the idea for the film from a newspaper clipping but he was too busy to make the film and passed it on to Jean-Luc Godard.

# BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID (1969)

**DIRECTOR**
GEORGE ROY HILL

**STARRING**
PAUL NEWMAN, ROBERT REDFORD, KATHARINE ROSS

**RUNNING TIME**
110 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH

**GENRE**
ADVENTURE, BIOGRAPHY, CRIME

## TRIVIA

When Robert Redford founded his now famous and internationally respected independent film institute and festival in Park City, Utah, he named it Sundance after his character in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

Have there ever been sexier outlaws on screen than Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid? Butch, played by Paul Newman, heads the most dangerous gang in the American Wild West (circa 1905) but he's affable, funny and doesn't shoot a man until halfway through the film. Sundance, played by Robert Redford, is a skilled murderer. He's taciturn, moody and most memorably, can't swim. Their relationship is the backbone of this epic bromance that has them robbing banks, blowing up trains and eventually moving to Bolivia to escape the law. The film begins with the instruction: 'Most of what follows is true.' William Goldman, who won an Oscar for the screenplay, converts robbers into heroes. They are so attractive that we root for them from the first frame. And they never lose their cool, not even when they are chased for days by a vigilant super-team of cops. These aren't men. They are instant myths. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* is almost impossible to dislike and yet, it was widely panned by critics. Roger Ebert dubbed it 'slow and disappointing', while Pauline Kael described it as a 'glorified vacuum'. Today the film is considered a classic. Watch it and be dazzled.

*I was an unknown. The director, George Roy Hill, fought for me. Paul Newman fought for me. I got paid to do the things I love and I got to know Paul well. There's a lot of alchemy in that film. It's a film about the freedom and the joy of living as outlaws and loving that. For young people the film became like a motto.*

**– Robert Redford to GQ magazine**

## AWARDS

Nominated for 7 **Academy Awards** including Best Picture and Best Director (George Roy Hill) and won 4 awards for Best Cinematography (Conrad L Hall), Best Music, Original Score for a Motion Picture (Burt Bacharach), Best Original Song (Burt Bacharach, Hal David – for the song *Raindrops Keep Fallin on My Head*) and Best Writing, Story and Screenplay Based on Material Not Previously Published or Produced (William Goldman).

# CASABLANCA (1942)

*Casablanca* offers a deep and abiding pleasure. The romance between the hard-boiled Rick, played with such panache by Humphrey Bogart, and the stunningly beautiful Ilsa, played by Ingrid Bergman, is still poignant. The dialogues – "Here's looking at you kid", "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine", "We'll always have Paris" – are still memorable. And the love triangle between a cynical saloon-owner who prides himself on not 'sticking his neck out' for anyone, a married woman and her husband, a famous leader of the French resistance, is still heartbreaking.

*Casablanca* is one of those rare films in which the stars aligned. Timing and talent connected to create a classic. It was made on a tight budget. There were last minute re-writes – in fact critic Roger Ebert writes that Bergman did the entire film without knowing which man her character would end up with and this confusion made her performance more 'emotionally convincing'. But this romantic noir connected with both critics and viewers. *Casablanca* was nominated for eight Oscars and won three, including Best Picture and Best Director. Its themes of idealism, dignity, love and the power of sacrifice, still resonate.

*I feel about* Casablanca *that it has a life of its own. There is something mystical about it. It seems to have filled a need, a need that was there before the film, a need that the film filled.*

**– Ingrid Bergman in *Ingrid: Ingrid Bergman, A Personal Biography***

**DIRECTOR**
MICHAEL CURTIZ
**STARRING**
HUMPHREY BOGART, INGRID BERGMAN, CLAUDE RAINS
**RUNNING TIME**
102 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
ROMANCE, DRAMA, WAR

**TRIVIA**

The famous line, 'Here's looking at you, kid,' was originally written as 'Here's good luck to you' in the script but apparently Humphrey Bogart changed the line after teaching Ingrid Bergman to play poker during the shoot. The phrase might come from a poker hand which includes a king, queen and jack, all three face cards that appear to be 'looking at you'.

## AWARDS

Nominated for 8 **Academy Awards**. Winner of 3 awards for Best Director (Michael Curtiz), Best Screenplay (Julius J Epstein, Philip G. Epstens) and Best Picture (Warner Bros.) in 1944.

Humphrey Bogart (Best Actor in a Leading Role) and Claude Rains (Best Actor in a Supporting Role) were also nominated for their performances.

Also nominated for Best Cinematography (Arthur Edeson) and Best Editing (Owen Marks) and Best Music (Max Steiner).

# CHARULATA (1964)

**DIRECTOR**
SATYAJIT RAY
**STARRING**
SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE, MADHABI MUKHERJEE, SAILEN MUKHERJEE
**RUNNING TIME**
117 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
BENGALI
**GENRE**
DRAMA

*Charulata,* adapted from a work by Rabindranath Tagore, is a story told with fierce tenderness and empathy. Charulata, played by the stunning Madhabi Mukherjee, is a 19th-century housewife, living a comfortable life in a beautiful mansion. She is curious, passionate and intelligent but all she can do to stay busy is embroider, play cards or observe the street outside through her lorgnettes. Her husband has affection for her but little time because he is too busy running a newspaper and railing against the British Raj. His cousin, an energetic, idealistic poet, comes to stay with them. She falls in love with him and tragedy ensues.

This could have been the stuff of soap opera but in the hands of a master, it becomes a great work of art. *Charulata* is a heartbreaking portrait of a woman, her gilded prison and eventually, a marriage that must find a way to mend itself. There are so many iconic scenes here – from the opening close-ups of Charulata embroidering to a sequence, in which as she swings she slowly realizes the extent of her feelings for her brother-in-law. In contrast to female characters in contemporary Bollywood – most of who are inevitably Barbie dolls – Charulata, a complex, flesh-and-blood woman, seems even more remarkable. In an interview with *Cineaste* magazine, Ray had said that *Charulata* is "a film that I would make the same way if I had to do it again." Indeed, it would be hard to make it better.

*In* Charulata, *the music had a lot to do with theme and context. Charulata's loneliness is established visually in the beginning. But her loneliness has a special quality. I had to explain that there was a youthfulness, a restlessness within her. So I needed something which was both playful and wistful, the theme that finally emerged is one of the best I have done.*

**– Satyajit Ray in the book *So Many Cinemas: The Motion Picture in India***

## AWARDS

Satyajit Ray won his second Silver Bear for Best Director in a row at the 15th **Berlin International Film Festival** in 1965. He had won the same award the previous year with *Mahanagar*.

*Charulata* also won the Golden Lotus Award for Best Film at the **National Film Awards** in 1965.

## TRIVIA

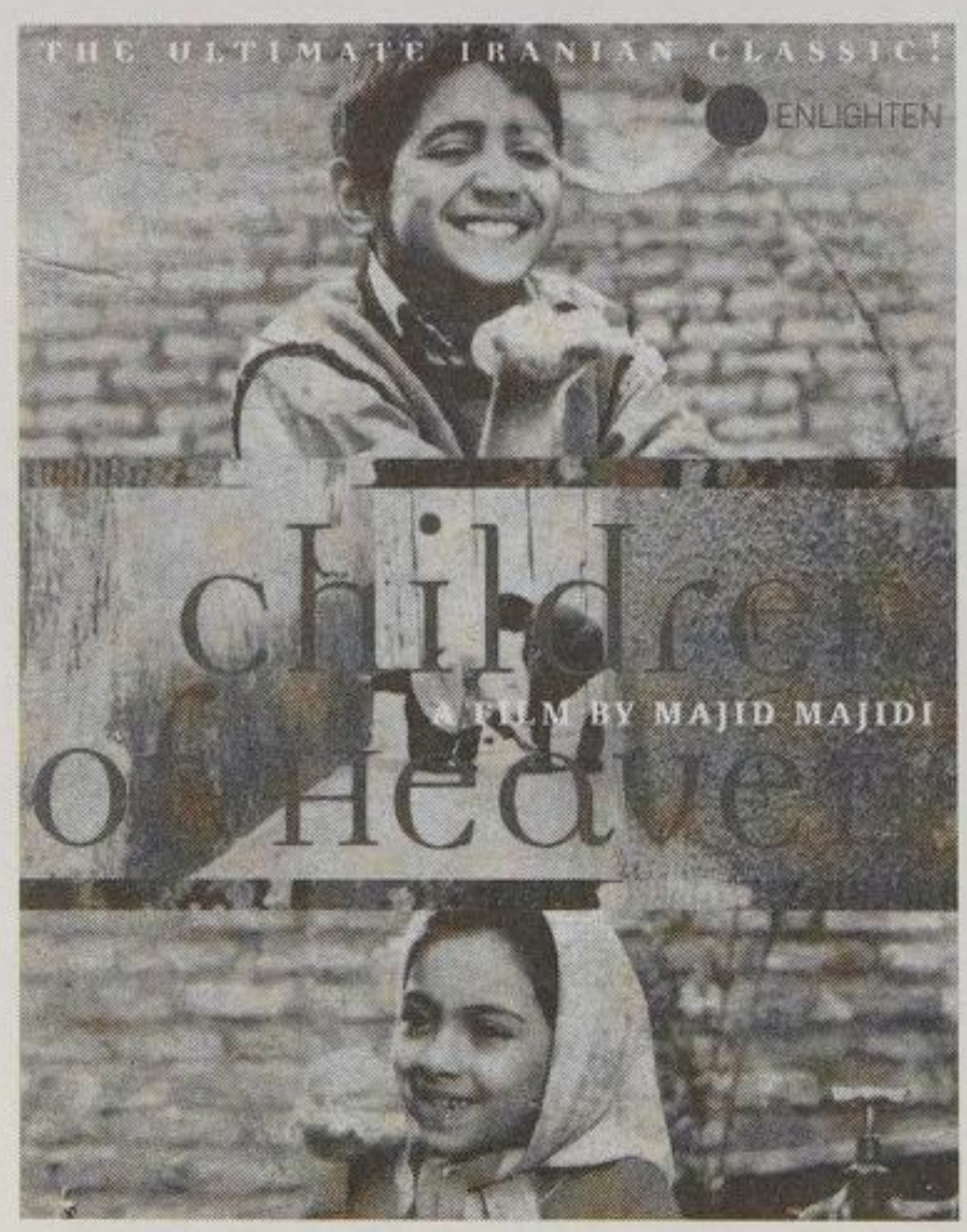
Satyajit Ray was also the music director of the film. The title theme and its variations were derived from a melody by Rabindranath Tagore.

# CHILDREN OF HEAVEN (1997)

**DIRECTOR**
MAJID MAJIDI
**STARRING**
AMIR FARROKH HASHEMIAN, BAHARE SEDDIQUI, MOHAMMAD AMIR NAJI
**RUNNING TIME**
89 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
IRAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
PERSIAN
**GENRE**
FAMILY, DRAMA

*Children of Heaven* was the first film from Iran to be nominated for an Oscar. The entire film revolves around a pair of shoes. A nine-year-old boy Ali, played by the thoughtful and sad-eyed Amir Farrokh Hashemian, loses his younger sister's shoes. Their father is struggling to put food on the table. The children know this so Ali and Zahra, played by Bahare Seddiqui, decide not to tell their parents. Instead, they figure out an ingenious way to share Ali's shoes – Zahra wears them to school in the morning and then runs to a particular spot where she gives them to Ali who wears them to his afternoon school.

Working with non-actors, Majid Majidi creates a heart-breaking story of innocence and poverty. *Children of Heaven* is unspeakably sad – the loss of an already tattered pair of shoes creates such hardship – but there is also a real sweetness here. Ali's love and concern for Zahra alleviates the bleakness. Majidi leaves us with a kernel of optimism. If you can convince your children to get past the fact that it's an Iranian film with subtitles, do have them watch it too. This is one for the whole family.




*My films come from my own upbringing, my fondness for childhood. These years are a wonderful bridge between innocence and adulthood.*

**– Majid Majidi in *Outlook India***

## AWARDS

Nominated for an **Academy Award** for Best Foreign Language Film (Iran) in 1999.

## TRIVIA

The film was officially remade in Hindi by Priyadarshan as *Bumm Bumm Bole* in 2010.

# CHINATOWN (1974)

"Forget it Jake, it's Chinatown." This immortal last line from *Chinatown* has become part of popular culture. It's become a catch-phrase to suggest that you are in over your head, that you don't know what you are dealing with, that inevitably you, like Jake Gittes in the film, will hurt the one you are trying to help. Writer Robert Towne put it like this: *Chinatown* as a notion begins to stand for the futility of good intentions.

Hailed by some critics as the greatest detective film ever, *Chinatown* is a labyrinth with a bleak centre. The complex plot about how corruption shapes a city – Los Angeles – unfurls the horrors slowly – murder, greed, incest. In one of the film's most powerful scenes, the monstrous businessman Noah Cross says: "See, Mr Gittes, most people never have to face the fact that at the right time and right place, they are capable of anything." This is a film with outstanding performances and direction, a brilliant screenplay and an ending that will haunt you long after the film is over. Even the poster – the smoke from Jack Nicholson's cigarette merging with Faye Dunaway's hair – is a landmark.

**DIRECTOR**
ROMAN POLANSKI
**STARRING**
JACK NICHOLSON, FAYE DUNAWAY, JOHN HUSTON
**RUNNING TIME**
130 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA, MYSTERY

## TRIVIA

Director Polanski appears in a cameo in *Chinatown* as the vicious hood who cuts Gittes' nostril with a knife when Gittes begins digging too deeply into the water conspiracy.

*I was eager to try my hand at something entirely different. In this case, a potentially first-rate thriller showing how the history and boundaries of LA had been fashioned by human greed.*

**– Roman Polanski in his autobiography, *Roman by Polanski***

## AWARDS

Won one **Academy Award** in 1975 for Best Original Screenplay (Robert Towne) and was nominated in 10 other categories including Best Picture, Best Director (Roman Polanski), Best Actor in a Leading Role (Jack Nicholson) and Best Actress in a Leading Role (Faye Dunaway).

3 **BAFTA Award**s for Best Director (Roman Polanski), Best Actor (Jack Nicholson) and Best Screenplay (Robert Towne) and was nominated in 8 other categories.

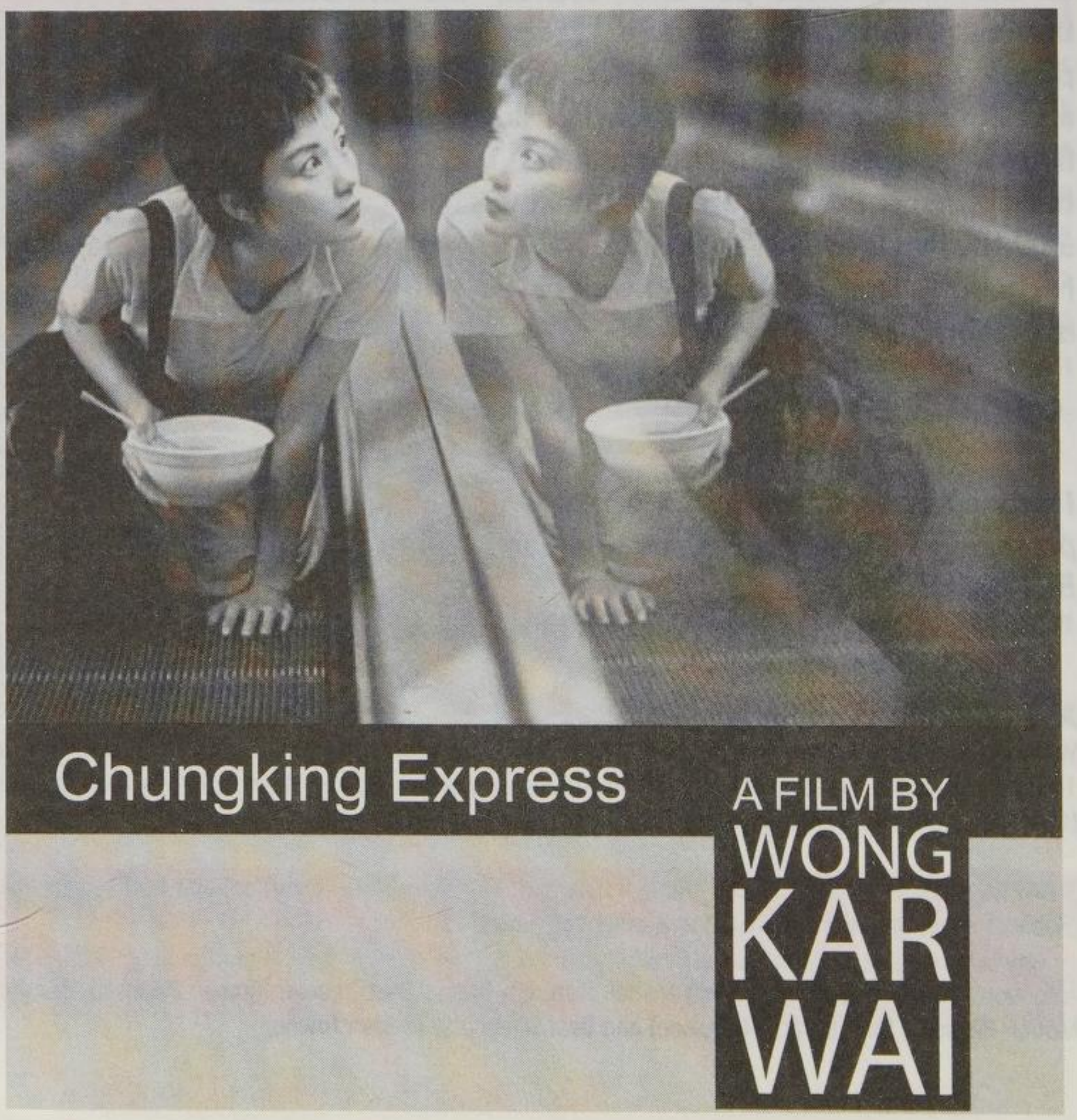
Also won 4 **Golden Globes** for Best Motion Picture – Drama, Best Director (Roman Polanski), Best Actor Motion Picture – Drama (Jack Nicholson) and Best Screenplay (Robert Towne).

# CHUNGKING EXPRESS (1994)

**DIRECTOR**
WONG KAR-WAI
**STARRING**
BRIGITTE LIN, TONY LEUNG, FAYE WONG
**RUNNING TIME**
102 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
HONG KONG
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
CANTONESE
**GENRE**
DRAMA, ROMANCE, MYSTERY

*Chungking Express* is the love story of two cops, whose names we never learn. The first, Cop 223 has just broken up with his girlfriend. Since she loved pineapples, he buys tins of pineapples with the expiration date of May 1. By then, either he will have reunited with her or lost her forever – at one point, he wonders, "If memories could be canned, would they also have expiry dates?" The second, Cop 663 has also broken up with his girlfriend so he makes conversation with stuffed toys and even his soap.

But words cannot convey the experience of watching this gorgeous, whimsical, moody film that somehow manages to feel giddy and sad at once. Chungking



Mansion, where the stories are set, is a frenzied maze of shops, restaurants, flophouses and workshops. There are crowds everywhere but there is also such haunting loneliness. Wong Kar-wai made this film to take a break from his epic *Ashes of Time*. He wrote the script during the day and shot during the night. *Chungking Express* reflects that – it's an evocative, gossamer dream.

*While watching the film, I just started crying. Not because the movie is sad but because I'm just so happy to love a movie this much.*

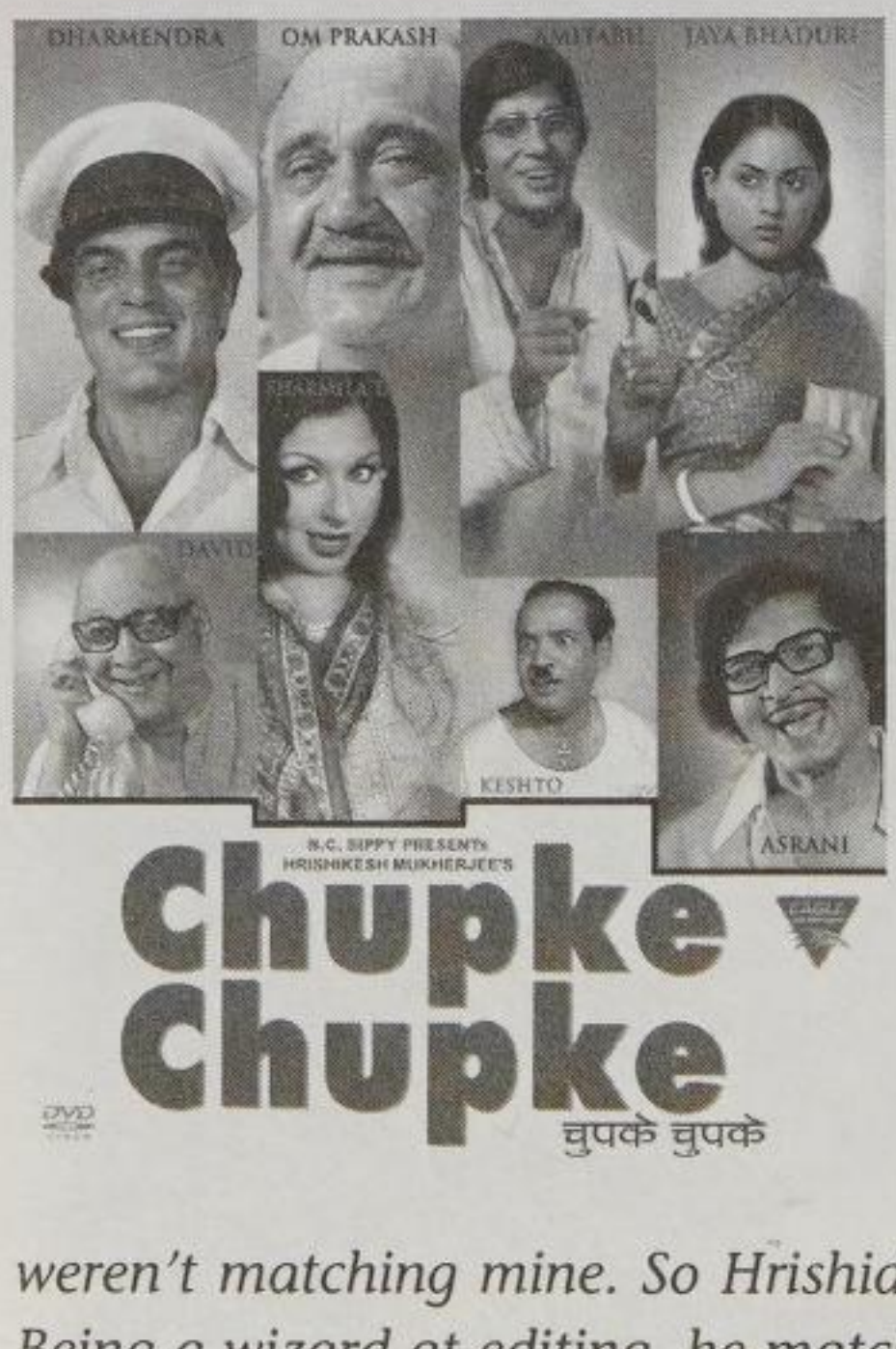
**– Quentin Tarantino while introducing a screening of the film at University of California (UCLA), Los Angeles**

**TRIVIA**

*Chungking Express*, the title under which the film was released in the United States, is not a direct translation of the original Hong Kong title, *Chung hing sam lam* (Chungking Jungle).

# CHUPKE CHUPKE (1975)

**DIRECTOR**
HRISHIKESH MUKHERJEE
**STARRING**
DHARMENDRA, AMITABH BACHCHAN, JAYA BHADURI, SHARMILA TAGORE
**RUNNING TIME**
127 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
COMEDY




*Chupke Chupke* is a delightful comedy about a man pretending to be a driver and fooling his wife's brother-in-law to prove that the 'genius *jijaji*' is in fact no genius at all. So Dr Parimal Tripathi, a botany professor played by Dharmendra, becomes the eccentric chauffer Pyaremohan, who insists on speaking in pristine Hindi – he refers to himself as a *vahan chalak*. To complicate matters, Parimal's friend Sukumar, played by Amitabh Bachchan, then pretends to be Parimal. Confusion and hilarity ensues before the *jijaji*, played by Om Prakash, concedes defeat.

Hrishikesh Mukherjee's cinema brims with wit, charm and an inherent decency. *Chupke Chupke* is no exception. There is a real sense of fun here, much of it provided by Dharmendra who is in top form. His comic timing doesn't falter, whether he's driving *jijaji* crazy by asking why English is such a strange language or surreptitiously holding his wife's hand in front of the whole family. *Chupke Chupke* is an artifact from a kinder, gentler time when humour in Hindi cinema wasn't crass or mindless. It has an effortless sweetness that lingers long after the film is over. Savour it.

*This one was a breeze. It was shot simply on a minimalistic set, perhaps with just two cut-outs. Though everyone tried to be accommodating, Dharamji's dates weren't matching mine. So Hrishida shot most of the song with us separately. Being a wizard at editing, he matched our individual shots perfectly.*

**– Amitabh Bachchan in *To Be Or Not to Be: Amitabh Bachchan***

**TRIVIA**

The movie is a remake of the Bengali superhit *Chhadmabeshi* which was based on Upendranath Ganguly's Bengali story *Chhadobeshi*.

# CINEMA PARADISO (1988)

*Cinema Paradiso* is a poignant, beautifully wrought love letter to the movies. To the many pleasures that cinema gives us, to how profoundly films impact our lives and to how much we have lost by reducing a joyous community activity to disconnected individual consumption – watching a film on your computer or iPad just seems so threadbare and lonely in comparison with the boisterous, chaotic screenings at the Cinema Paradiso.

The cinema is located in a small Italian village in the 1940s. The film is about the relationship between a little boy Toto, who loves the movies and the projectionist, Alfredo played by Philippe Noiret, a grizzled old man who grows to love Toto like a son.

The Paradiso is a place of magic. Everything that matters in Toto's life happens here – from his first sexual encounter to his first embrace with the girl he loves.

Director Giuseppe Tornatore creates a space so gorgeous that when it finally comes down, you weep along with the townspeople. In fact, this is a film that will make you tear up often. And at the end, when the grown-up Toto, now a famous film director, sits in a modern theatre in Rome to watch reels that Alfredo has bequeathed him, you will cry copiously. Not just for Toto and Alfredo but for yourself and all that you have loved and lost.

**DIRECTOR**
GIUSEPPE TORNATORE

**STARRING**
PHILIPPE NOIRET,
SALVATORE CASCIO,
JACQUES PERRIN

**RUNNING TIME**
155 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
ITALY

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ITALIAN

**GENRE**
DRAMA

## TRIVIA

The film was originally released in Italy at 155 minutes, but poor box office performance in its native country led to it being shortened to 123 minutes for international release where it was an instant success.

*I wanted to rebuild what the cinema hall used to be once; a sacred place where people used to know each other, to spend time together, to smile, and dream.*

**– Director Giuseppe Tornatore to *Empire* magazine**

## AWARDS

The **Academy Award** for Best Foreign Film in 1990

The Grand Prize of the Jury at the 1989 **Cannes Film Festival**.

5 **BAFTA Awards** including Best Film not in the English Language, Best Actor (Philippe Noiret), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Salvatore Cascio), Best Original Film Score (Ennio Morricone) and Best Screenplay – Original (Giuseppe Tornatore) in 1990.

Also won the Best Foreign Language Film at the **Golden Globes** in 1990.

# CITIZEN KANE (1941)

**DIRECTOR**
ORSON WELLES
**STARRING**
ORSON WELLES, JOSEPH COTTEN, DOROTHY COMINGORE
**RUNNING TIME**
119 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA, MYSTERY

## TRIVIA

Director Steven Spielberg bought the only remaining Rosebud sled from *Citizen Kane* (1941) for $55,000 at auction at Sotheby's. He called the sled 'a symbolic emblem of quality in the film business'.

*Citizen Kane* is widely considered the best film ever made. Decade after decade, critics and viewers put it at the top of their list. When I saw it again for this book, I wondered if it would hold up or feel overrated. I'm happy to report that despite the decades the masterpiece endures. From the first frame to the last, *Citizen Kane* keeps you in a vice-like grip. There is such pleasure in partaking in Herman J. Mankiewicz's and Welles' brilliant script, Gregg Toland's path-breaking cinematography and the pitch-perfect performances, from even the smaller players like Ray Collins as James W. Gettys, a politician who plots Kane's downfall.

The rise and demise of Charles Foster Kane (inspired by the media mogul William Randolph Hearst), carries a mythical weight. But this film connects the way it does because Welles enables us not only to see the man's monstrous flaws but also his humanity. At the end, as he tearfully pleads with his second wife to not leave him, you understand completely, his singular tragedy. This film has so many great scenes and great lines that it's impossible to pick one or two and yet, *Citizen Kane* won nine Oscar nominations but only one award – for best original screenplay. A fact that probably brings solace to the legions of nominees who lose every year – they are in terrific company!

Citizen Kane *is to cinema what James Joyce's* Ulysses *is to literature. I was conscious almost immediately of the incredible use of image, sound, performance, editing, music and lighting to tell a unique story. That's how I turned my attention to cinema, and I still continue to do it in the hope that someday I can make a film that will impress me as much as* Citizen Kane *did then. And I certainly haven't done that yet.*

**– Director William Friedkin in Time Out's *1000 Films to Change Your Life***

## AWARDS

Nominated for 9 **Academy Awards** including Best Actor (Orson Welles), Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, Best Film Editing, Best Music, Best Sound, Best Director and Best Picture.
Won one award for Best Writing, Original Screenplay (Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles).

# CITY OF GOD (2002)

*City of God* begins with a shot of a knife being sharpened. For the next two hours or so, the director plunges something sharp into your belly and churns your guts with this horrific story of little boys in the hood.

It's the 1960s. We are taken into the heart of a Brazilian *favela* or ghetto called Cicade de Deus or City of God, which is a virtual combat zone, run by rival gangs.

Only these are run by children, some so young that they are called The Runts. There is no innocence in this childhood. It's all about murder, money and power. The motto is – Kill: Be Respected.

With a constantly moving camera, superb editing and mostly non-professional actors, Meirelles creates a horror movie that doesn't let up. In one harrowing scene, little boys from a rival gang are asked to choose where they would rather be shot in the hand or foot. After which, another little boy is asked to randomly pick one wailing kid and shoot him. But *City of God* also has heart, humour and textured characters, which is what makes the tragedy more acute. This furious film about a furious place is based on a best-selling book by Paulo Lins, who grew up in the actual City of God. It is tough but essential viewing.

*I made this film for the Brazilian middle class. It was an opportunity for me to find out more about my country. We abandoned this part of society and now we are reaping the consequences.*

**– Director Fernando Meirelles to *The Guardian***

**DIRECTOR**
FERNANDO MEIRELLES
**STARRING**
ALEXANDRE RODRIGUES, LEANDRO FIRMINO DA HORA
**RUNNING TIME**
130 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
BRAZIL
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
PORTUGUESE
**GENRE**
CRIME, DRAMA

## TRIVIA

Most of the cast of the film were from real-life *favelas* (Brazilian slums), and in some cases, even the real-life City of God *favela* itself. About a hundred children and youths were hand-picked and placed into an 'actors' workshop' for several months.

## AWARDS

Nominated for 4 **Academy Awards** including Best Adapted Screenplay (Braulio Mantovani), Best Director (Fernando Meirelles), Best Cinematography (Cesar Charlone) and Best Film Editing (Daniel Rezende).

Nominated Best Foreign Language Film at the **Golden Globes** in 2003.

**BAFTA Award** for Best Editing (Daniel Rezende) in in 2003.

# CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON (2000)

**DIRECTOR**
ANG LEE
**STARRING**
CHOW YUN-FAT, MICHELLE YEOH, ZHANG ZIYI
**RUNNING TIME**
120 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
TAIWAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
MANDARIN
**GENRE**
ACTION, ADVENTURE

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a film that soars, literally. Ang Lee's martial arts saga is a fantastical, exhilarating epic, in which characters nimbly skip over roof-tops and conduct sword fights on tree tops. These battles, choreographed by Yuen Wo-Ping are a thing of grace and beauty. But despite the body count and bloodshed, the battles seem serene, even spiritual and incredibly poetic.

Based on a novel by Wang Du Lu, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has it all – a legendary sword called the Green Destiny, a noble warrior, a villainess named Jade Fox and one of the most gorgeous love stories I've seen on screen. The warrior Li Mu Bai, played by Chow Yun-Fat and the woman he loves, Yu Shu Lien played by Michelle Yeoh, never act on their feelings but as he dies in her arms, he tells her: "I would rather be a ghost drifting by your side as a condemned soul than enter heaven without you." This is spectacle with melancholy and ache – a rare and winning combination!

*Making a martial arts film in English to me is the same as John Wayne speaking Chinese in a Western.*

**– Ang Lee in *The Cinema of Ang Lee***

## AWARDS

Nominated for 10 **Academy Awards**, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Music (Original Song), Best Writing (Adapted Screenplay), Best Film Editing, and Best Costume Design. The film holds the record for the most Oscar nominations for a 'foreign' film.

4 **Academy Awards** for Best Art Direction (Timmy Yip), Best Cinematography (Peter Pau), Best Original Score (Tan Dun) and Best Foreign Language film for Taiwan in 2001.

**BAFTA Award** and **Golden Globe** for Best Foreign Film and Best Director (Ang Lee) in 2001.

## TRIVIA

Chow Yun-Fat had earlier said that he would never play a period piece and would never shave his head and have a ponytail. He had also never held a sword before. Ang Lee modified the script and reduced the fighting scenes and beefed up his character's relationship with Michelle Yeoh after he came on board.

# CYRANO DE BERGERAC (1990)

As Cyrano de Bergerac, a magnificent hulk of a man, staggers to his death, he rails against his enemies. "You take everything," he says, "the laurel and the rose too! Go on, take them! But, in spite of you, one thing goes with me now. And tonight, when I at last God behold my salute will sweep his blue threshold with something spotless, a diamond in the ash, which I take in spite of you and that's my panache."

Panache is what defines Cyrano, a man with a voracious appetite for life, theatre, poetry and his beauteous cousin Roxane. Except that Cyrano has been born with a nose that, he says, 'precedes me by 15 minutes'. When Roxane becomes attracted to a handsome but callow young man, Christian, Cyrano agrees to assist him, that is, he writes reams of poetry and copious letters that the man passes off as his own. So unwittingly Roxane falls in love with two men – one for his surface and the other, for his soul. Based on a famous 19th-century play, *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a lesson in living life large. Depardieu, who won an Oscar nomination for his performance, is both delightful and damaged. This is a sad, sweet story that has inspired many versions in films through the years (including Kunal Kohli's *Mujhse Dosti Karoge!*). But this one, I believe, is the best.

*I think that I shall never view*
*A French film without Depardieu.*

**– John Updike as quoted by *The Guardian***

**DIRECTOR**
JEAN-PAUL RAPPENEAU

**STARRING**
GERARD DEPARDIEU, ANNE BROCHET, VINCENT PEREZ

**RUNNING TIME**
137 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
FRANCE

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
FRENCH

**GENRE**
COMEDY, DRAMA

## TRIVIA

The English subtitles for the film were written by acclaimed author Anthony Burgess who wrote *A Clockwork Orange.*

## AWARDS

Gerard Depardieu won Best Actor and Pierre Lhomme won the Technical Grand Prize for cinematography at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1990. Also nominated for the **Palme d'Or**.

**Golden Globe** for Best Foreign Language Film in 1991.

Nominated for 5 **Academy Awards** in 1991 including Best Actor in a Leading Role (Gerard Depardieu), Best Art Direction (Ezio Frigerio, Jacques Rouxel), Best Make-up (Michele Burke, Jean-Pierre Eychenne), Best Foreign Language film for France and Best Costume Design (Franca Squarciapino).

4 **BAFTA Awards** in technical categories and was nominated for another 4 categories including Best Actor in 1992.

# DEEWAAR (1975)

**DIRECTOR**
YASH CHOPRA

**STARRING**
SHASHI KAPOOR,
AMITABH BACHCHAN

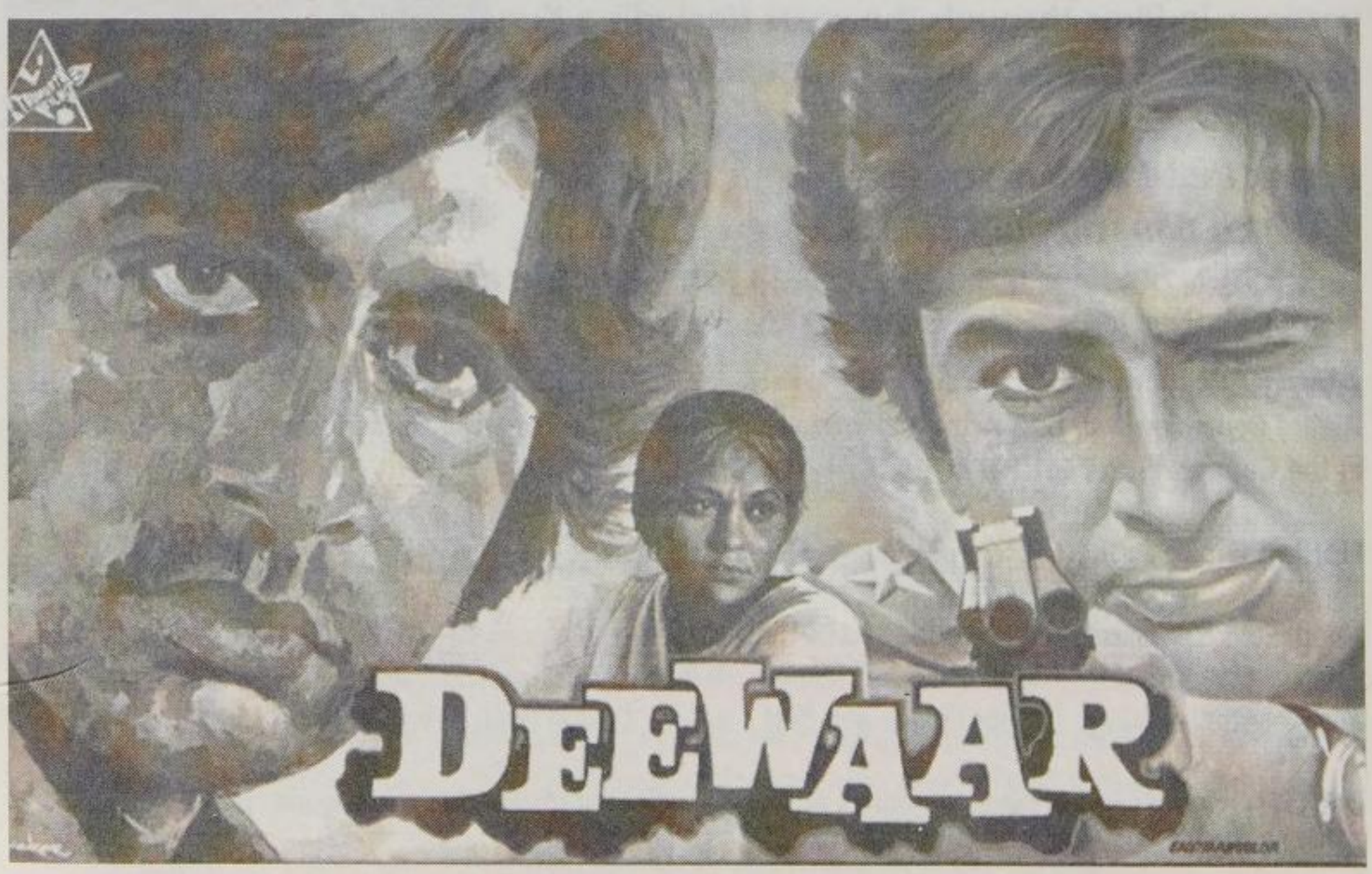
**RUNNING TIME**
174 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI

**GENRE**
DRAMA

In an interview, Danny Boyle described *Deewaar* as being 'absolutely key to Indian cinema'. This seminal film, about two brothers on opposite sides of the law, cemented the archetype of the 'Angry Young Man', reinforced the importance of the mother as a moral centre in Hindi cinema and firmly established Amitabh Bachchan as the finest actor of his generation. *Deewaar* is also, with the exception of *Sholay*, the finest script that Salim-Javed created. So the incessant zooms and outlandish clothes (at one point, Madan Puri playing a villain wears a coat with such wide lapels that they touch his shoulders) might seem comically dated today. But the story, emotion and performance still pack a wallop. There is nothing in Hindi cinema that matches the seething fury of Vijay, the sullen, atheist mafiosi, who walks into a temple and demands that God save his dying mother. Or the iconic scene under the bridge that gave us Hindi cinema's most famous dialogue – *Mere paas ma hai.* Incredibly, Bachchan did not win a best acting Filmfare award. But Salim-Javed swept the writing awards. Naturally then, they won nothing for



*Sholay*, which also released in 1975 and which prompted Javed Akhtar to remark, "One should never do too much good work in one year."

Deewaar *was a script which we heard. We didn't work on it. Salim-Javed brought the script to us. What you see in the script was definitely inspired by* Mother India. *But even as far as I think they had written a brilliant script, more brilliant were the dialogues. That was one script and screenplay where you didn't have to delete anything after making, it was such – such a perfect script. We didn't do anything. I don't think they have written a better script than* Deewaar *ever.*

**– Yash Chopra in his biography *Yash Chopra: Fifty Years in Indian Cinema***

## AWARDS

7 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Film, Best Director (Yash Chopra), Best Story, Best Screenplay and Best Dialogue Writer (Salim Khan, Javed Akhtar), Best Sound Recordist, Best Supporting Actor (Shashi Kapoor) in 1976.

## TRIVIA

Eighty per cent of *Deewaar* was shot at night. Amitabh Bachchan shot for *Deewaar* at night and during the day for *Sholay*.

# DILWALE DULHANIA LE JAYENGE (1995)

**DIRECTOR**
ADITYA CHOPRA
**STARRING**
SHAH RUKH KHAN, KAJOL, ANUPAM KHER, AMRISH PURI
**RUNNING TIME**
189 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
ROMANCE

In Aditya Chopra's old office, there used to hang a poster of *DDLJ* with the following inscription by Shah Rukh Khan: "More than half my career ago, you gave me a dream to cherish all my life. My kids will see it, my grandchildren will love it and I'm sure even in heaven they are playing our film – so my parents would have seen it too. Thanx for taking me to them and making me the star I'm today. Lots of love and come let's make some more dreams together."

*DDLJ* is a sugar-coated, naïve dream. But it is a dream that viewers have invested in for over 15 years because the love story of Raj, played by Shah Rukh and Simran, played by Kajol, is rooted in an emotional reality. The plot is

impossible but the drama touches on relationships and family in a way that feels honest and true. Scenes in the film, like the mother-daughter conversation in which the mother asks her child to forget the man she loves, are so moving that we willingly overlook the loopholes in logic.

Anyway we don't go to the movies looking for realism, especially not movies made by Yash Raj Films. *DDLJ* is a delightful fantasy that is still entreating viewers to 'Come...fall in love.'

*My film is not different. I'm making the most commercial, clichéd,* tapori *[pedestrian] movie. I'm making the oldest story in the world.*

**– Director Aditya Chopra to Kajol as reported in the book *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ): BFI Modern Film Classics***

## AWARDS

10 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Film, Best Director (Aditya Chopra), Best Actor (Shah Rukh Khan), Best Actress (Kajol), Best Supporting Actress (Farida Jalal), Best Comedian (Anupam Kher), Best Lyricist (Anand Bakshi – for the song *Tujhe dekha to*), Best Screenplay (Aditya Chopra), Best Dialogue (Aditya Chopra and Javed Siddiqui) and Best Male Playback Singer (Udit Narayan – for the song *Mehendi Laga ke rakhna*).

**National Award** for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.

## TRIVIA

*DDLJ* is one of the few films that credits a person (Kirron Kher) for the 'title idea'. The title is part of the lyrics of a song from the film *Chor Machaye Shor* (1970).

# DON (1978)

**DIRECTOR**
CHANDRA BAROT
**STARRING**
AMITABH BACHCHAN, ZEENAT AMAN, PRAN
**RUNNING TIME**
175 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
ACTION, THRILLER

I know the film has been reinterpreted for the new millennium but for viewers of a certain generation there is only one Don – Amitabh Bachchan. To enjoy the original film, you have to get past a few things – like Pran's ridiculous wig or an unintentionally hilarious scene in which he walks on a tightrope, high above Mumbai traffic, while carrying two grown-up children or perhaps, a rather rotund Om Shivpuri posing as an Interpol officer.

But beyond all this, lies Salim-Javed's deliciously twisty tale of an ordinary man caught in extraordinary circumstances; Kalyanji Anandji's superb soundtrack and Amitabh Bachchan's perfectly pitched double performance.

He shines as both – the suavely murderous Don who kills an informer and then casually informs his gang, *mujhe uske jootey acche nahin lage.* And the gawky, paan-chewing *chhora Ganga kinarewala,* who innocently asks: *Yeh aadmi Daaan hai?* His sheer joy in the song *Khaike Paan Banaraswala* is enough to make this film worth watching. Check it out.

*Manoj Kumar told me a song was needed. When he saw it, he said the film was too tight. He said it made taking a toilet break difficult, because the story was so gripping! So, we included* Khaike Paan Banaraswaala.

**– Chandra Barot in an interview to Rediff.com**

## AWARDS

3 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Actor (Amitabh Bachchan), Best Female Playback Singer (Asha Bhonsle – for *Ye mera dil pyar ka deewana*) and Best Male Playback Singer (Kishore Kumar – for *O khaike paan banaraswala*).

## TRIVIA

The producer of the film Nariman Irani passed away six months before the release and Chandra Barot had no money for the film's promotions.

# EDGE OF HEAVEN, THE (2007)

*The Edge of Heaven* is about six principal characters whose lives crisscross each other's but never connect. Like *Amores Perros*, *Babel* and Paul Haggis' *Crash*, this is a multistrand narrative that moves seamlessly between characters and countries. Fatih Akin, a Turkish-German filmmaker, creates a quietly powerful meditation on family ties, dislocation and the definition of home.

The film begins with an old man and a prostitute. He is lonely and asks her to be his full-time companion. But when she becomes friends with his son, he kills her in a fit of jealousy. The murder sets off a chain of events that result in coffins moving from one country to the next. But there is no melodrama here – just a quiet, assured movement toward inevitable tragedy. Akin does not judge his characters. He allows us to see them with all their flaws as people who did the best they could in difficult circumstances. All the performances are first-rate but what stayed with me was the wise and grieving face of Hanna Schygulla, one of Germany's most iconic actresses, best-known for her Fassbinder films. From the first time you see her, you understand that she knows, firsthand, of the frailty of human beings. But there is such serenity and compassion on her face. She embodies this profound film.

**DIRECTOR**
FATIH AKIN

**STARRING**
BAKI DAVRAK, HANNA SCHYGULLA, NURGUL YESILCAY

**RUNNING TIME**
116 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
GERMANY/TURKEY

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
GERMAN/TURKISH/ ENGLISH

**GENRE**
DRAMA

*All six characters are reflecting a part of me. I was also inspired by a lot of people I met. I met this political artist, musicians who try to change the world with their music, which is maybe naïve. For the first time I saw that political resistance can be very sexy.*

**– Director Fatih Akin at the Cannes International Film Festival, 2007**

## AWARDS

Best Screenplay (Fatih Akin) at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 2007 and was nominated for the **Palme d'Or.**

## TRIVIA

The German title of the film *Auf der anderen Seite* translates literally to 'On the Other Side'.

# ENTER THE DRAGON (1973)

**DIRECTOR**
ROBERT CLOUSE

**STARRING**
BRUCE LEE, JOHN SAXON, JIM KELLY

**RUNNING TIME**
99 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
HONG KONG/USA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH

**GENRE**
ACTION, CRIME

*Enter the Dragon* has acquired mythical status because it was Bruce Lee's last film – his death at age 32, a month before its release, made him a global superstar. The film itself isn't great but Lee is spectacular. Here he plays a character named Lee, who enters a martial arts tournament on an island fortress near Hong Kong. The place is run by the suave, ruthless Han who is described as a 'Shaolin monk turned renegade'. Which means he dabbles in prostitution, drugs and is protected by an entourage of lethal female bodyguards.

Lee's lean body, his incredible moves (the fights in the film are staged by him) and his charisma propel *Enter the Dragon.* The DVD includes scenes that weren't in the original film, including a few that espouse Lee's martial arts philosophy. So Lee says: "A good fight should be like a small play but played seriously," and "When there is an opportunity, I do not hit. It hits by itself." The confrontation between Han and Lee ends in a cleverly done duel in a house of mirrors. An added attraction is John Saxon playing a smooth-talking gambler who also participates in the tournament. *Enter the Dragon* grossed over $200 mn worldwide. It moulded generations of successive martial arts heroes including Chuck Norris, Steven Segal and of course, Jackie Chan.

*When he came out, I was a stuntman. I was thinking I want to be Bruce Lee one day – that was my dream. Every time I saw him, I went and did training. When I got depressed, I watched Bruce Lee movies. I learned everything from Bruce Lee.*

**– Jackie Chan in *Time* magazine**

**TRIVIA**

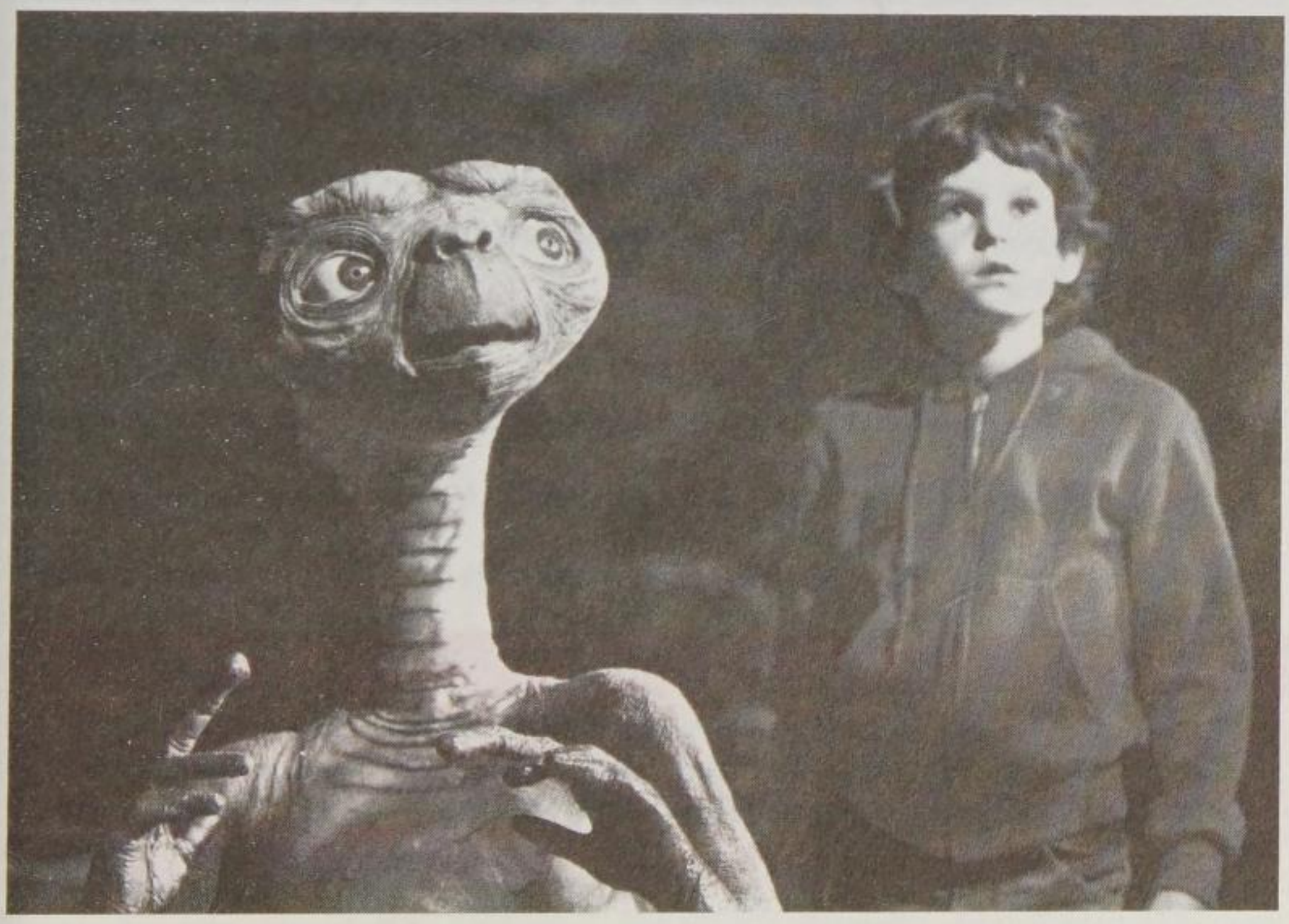
Jackie Chan was one of the stuntmen for the film. This was instrumental in Chan's further association with Golden Harvest Studios, which later launched his career. Chan shows up as a henchman when Lee is discovered inside Han's underground lair.

# E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (1982)

I cry when I watch *E.T.* Each time, I see that wise-eyed creature point his spindly finger at Elliot's heart and say "I'll be right here," I weep unashamedly. But the film's genius is that it also makes me laugh out loud, ache with emotion and fills me with wonder and delight. Is there any thing more enchanting than E.T. hiding in the closet among stuffed toys or going trick or treating on Halloween under a white sheet – when he sees a child dressed as Yoda, he starts to follow him, saying, "home, home"?

Steven Spielberg's love story between a 10-year-old boy and an alien had an innocence and purity that few movies can muster. And special effects designer Carlo Rambaldi's creation – a waddling creature with strange limbs and leathery skin who holds us with his eyes – was pure magic. It's hard to believe but Columbia Pictures turned down the movie because it was deemed too risky. Clearly, as writer William Goldman so eloquently put it, in the movie business, 'nobody knows anything'.

**DIRECTOR**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**STARRING**
HENRY THOMAS, DREW BARRYMORE, DEE WALLACE
**RUNNING TIME**
115 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
FAMILY, ADVENTURE, DRAMA



*E.T. was about the divorce of my parents, how I felt after my parents broke up. [It was] the first movie I ever made for myself.*

**– Director Steven Spielberg in the book *Steven Spielberg: A Biography***

## AWARDS

4 **Academy Awards** in technical categories like Best Visual Effects, Best Sound, Best Sound Effects Editing and Best Original Score by John Williams in 1983. Nominated in 5 other categories for Best Director (Steven Spielberg) and Best Picture.

John Williams' music also won awards at the **BAFTA Awards** and at the **Golden Globes** where it also won Best Motion Picture – Drama in 1983.

## TRIVIA

The iconic scene of Henry and E.T. against the giant moon was adapted by director Steven Spielberg in the logo for his production company, Amblin Entertainment.

# FAREWELL MY CONCUBINE (1993)

*Farewell My Concubine* is a visually sumptuous, ineffably tragic story of two artistes in the famed Peking Opera whose lives play out against tumultuous political events spanning half a century.

The two meet as children and are moulded through brutal methods (these include regular lashings and being strapped upside down) into famous performers, best known for their roles as king and concubine in a traditional opera. Their relationship becomes especially rocky after a woman, Juxian played by the stunning Gong Li, expands it into a triangle. But Cheng Dieyi, played by Leslie Cheung, and Duan Xiaolou played by Zhang Fengyi, are locked together in an eternal dance of love and hate.

Chen Kaige, one of the seminal figures of China's Fifth Generation directors, tells the story on an epic scale. The film has sweep and scale but we never lose sight of the details – from the gorgeous opera costumes to Dieyi's expressions of a love so intense that ultimately it must turn vicious. *Farewell My Concubine* was nominated for two Oscars and is the only Chinese film ever to win the Palme d'Or. It is a thing of great beauty. Savour it.

**DIRECTOR**
CHEN KAIGE
**STARRING**
LESLIE CHEUNG, ZHANG FENGYI, GONG LI
**RUNNING TIME**
171 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
CHINA, HONG KONG
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
MANDARIN
**GENRE**
ROMANCE, DRAMA

*It's not an epic. It's a personal story about a few individuals.*

**– Director Chen Kaige in the book *China Into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema***

## AWARDS

Nominated for 2 **Academy Awards** for Best Cinematography and Best Foreign Language Film in 1994.

Best Foreign Language Film at both the **Golden Globes** and the **BAFTA Awards** in 1994.

**Palme d'Or** and the FIPRESCI Prize at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1993.

## TRIVIA

Jackie Chan turned down the leading role that later went to Leslie Cheung. Chan believed the opera school is most accurately depicted in the film as he himself had attended the China Drama Academy for 10 years to prepare for a life in the Peking Opera.

# GODFATHER, THE (1972)

**DIRECTOR**
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
**STARRING**
MARLON BRANDO, AL PACINO, JAMES CAAN, ROBERT DUVALL
**RUNNING TIME**
175 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
CRIME, DRAMA

2012 marked the 40th anniversary of Francis Ford Coppola's classic. *The Godfather* is no longer a film, it is a myth. The characters – Vito Corleone, Michael, Sonny, Tom Hagen – and scenes are so well-known that the dialogue has become part of colloquial language. "I will make him an offer that he can't refuse", "It's not personal Sonny, it's strictly business", "Luca Brasi sleeps with the fishes." These lines in themselves contain a world of meaning and don't require further explanation.

The years haven't dated a single frame in *The Godfather* – from the virtuoso opening wedding sequence to the last despairing close-up of Kay's face. In fact, the artistry seems even richer now – from Nino Rota's haunting score to Al Pacino's staggering performance – his eyes seem to get more bruised as the picture progresses and bodies pile up. Predictably, *The Godfather* spawned a school of imitators.

This was a movie so good that it almost immobilized one of the world's most successful directors. Steven Spielberg said: "I felt that I should quit, that there was no reason to continue directing because I would never reach that level of confidence." *The Godfather* still has that power.

## TRIVIA

Marlon Brando wanted to make Don Corleone 'look like a bulldog', so he stuffed his cheeks with cotton wool for the audition. For actual filming, he wore a mouthpiece made by a dentist; which is on display in the American Museum of the Moving Image in Queens, New York.

*The Godfather was a very unappreciated movie when we were making it. They were very unhappy with it. They didn't like the cast. They didn't like the way I was shooting it. I was always on the verge of getting fired. So it was an extremely nightmarish experience.*

**– Director Francis Ford Coppola in an interview to the Academy of Achievement**

## AWARDS

Nominated in 10 categories at the **Academy Awards** and won 3 categories for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola), Best Actor in a Leading Role (Marlon Brando) and Best Picture in 1973. The Original Score nomination was later disqualified.

**BAFTA Award** for the film's score by Nino Rota.

5 **Golden Globes** in 1973 for Best Motion Picture – Drama, Best Director (Francis Ford Coppola), Best Motion Picture Actor – Drama (Marlon Brando), Best Original Score (Nino Rota) and Best Screenplay (Francis Ford Coppola, Mario Puzo).

# HUM DONO (1961)

There is an adjective that I believe, was created only for Dev Anand – dashing. And nowhere was he more dashing than in *Hum Dono,* in which he played the double role of Major Verma and Major Anand. Two men, who just happen to look alike, who are pining for their respective loves and fighting a war that invariably warps their lives beyond recognition.

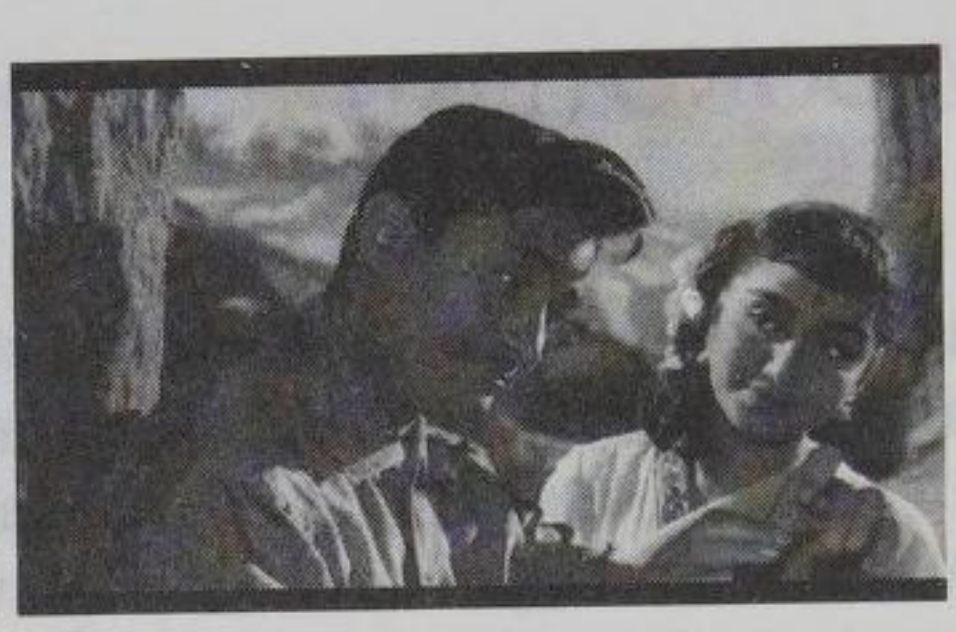
The film was credited to Amarjeet but bears the stamp of master director Vijay Anand, who wrote the screenplay and dialogue. This story could have been a standard-issue weepie but instead we get controlled and layered melodrama, enhanced by music that has lost none of its sweep and power, even five decades later.

Has there ever been a lover's plea in Hindi cinema that matches the lilting *Abhi na jao chhod kar?* Has any other song captured a world view with the ease of *Main zindagi ka saath nibhata chala gaya?* Do you know a *bhajan* with more pathos than *Allah tero naam?* Composer Jaidev and lyricist Sahir Ludhianvi created a musical landmark. This is one Hindi film in which you won't fast-forward the songs.

**DIRECTOR**
AMARJEET
**STARRING**
DEV ANAND, NANDA, SADHANA
**RUNNING TIME**
164 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
DRAMA

*My first assignment was to censor letters, to and from Indian and British Army personnel, posted in India on army bases. It was a very interesting job, for I could open and read all sorts of letters, written by officers and men of the British armed forces to their loved ones. This was an education for me.*

**– Dev Anand in his autobiography *Romancing With Life***



## AWARDS

Dev Anand was nominated for a **Filmfare Award** for Best Actor in 1962.

Also nominated for the Golden Bear at the **Berlin International Film Festival** in 1962.

### TRIVIA

*Hum Dono* was the first Navketan film to be re-released in colour in 2011 as *Hum Dono Rangeen.*

# IN WHICH ANNIE GIVES IT THOSE ONES (1989)

**DIRECTOR**
PRADIP KISHEN
**STARRING**
ARUNDHATI ROY, RITURAJ, ARJUN RAINA
**RUNNING TIME**
112 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY

It isn't easy to see this film. It was screened once on Doordarshan at midnight. The DVD has never been released but you can find bad copies on the internet and the National Film Archive has a print. Why should you put in so much effort? Because *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* was path-breaking in many ways. It was one of the earliest 'Hinglish' film made in the country – so a typical dialogue went like this: *'Pata nehi yaar Annie ka kuchh.* I asked him in the bogs and he started giving it those ones.' Set in the National Institute of Architecture in 1974, it is the ancestor of student films in Hindi cinema. Its eccentric characters are unmatched – Annie is in fact a male student, who has failed four years, in fifth year and has a pet hen named Sangita. It was one of the few times that Arundhati, who would go on to win a Booker Prize, acted. And it is also the film debut of Shah Rukh Khan. He plays a decidedly fey college gossip who appears in four scenes and speaks only in two. He is billed simply as 'Senior'.

The film has a wonderful laid-back, grunge vibe that you rarely see in Hindi cinema. Find it if you can.

*The film was commissioned by Bhaskar Ghosh who had promised to release it without changes. And he was actually watching it for the first time when he got a call from Rajiv Gandhi's office telling him he was being sacked.*

**– Director Pradip Kishen in *The Economic Times***

## AWARDS

**National Award** for Best Screenplay (Arundhati Roy) and Best Feature Film in Other Languages than those specified in Schedule VII of the Constitution in 1989.

## TRIVIA

'Giving it those ones' is Delhi School of Architecture slang for 'faking it big time'.

# INFERNAL AFFAIRS (2002)

**DIRECTORS**
ANDREW LAU AND ALAN MAK

**STARRING**
TONY LEUNG, ANDY LAU, ANTHONY WONG

**RUNNING TIME**
101 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
HONG KONG

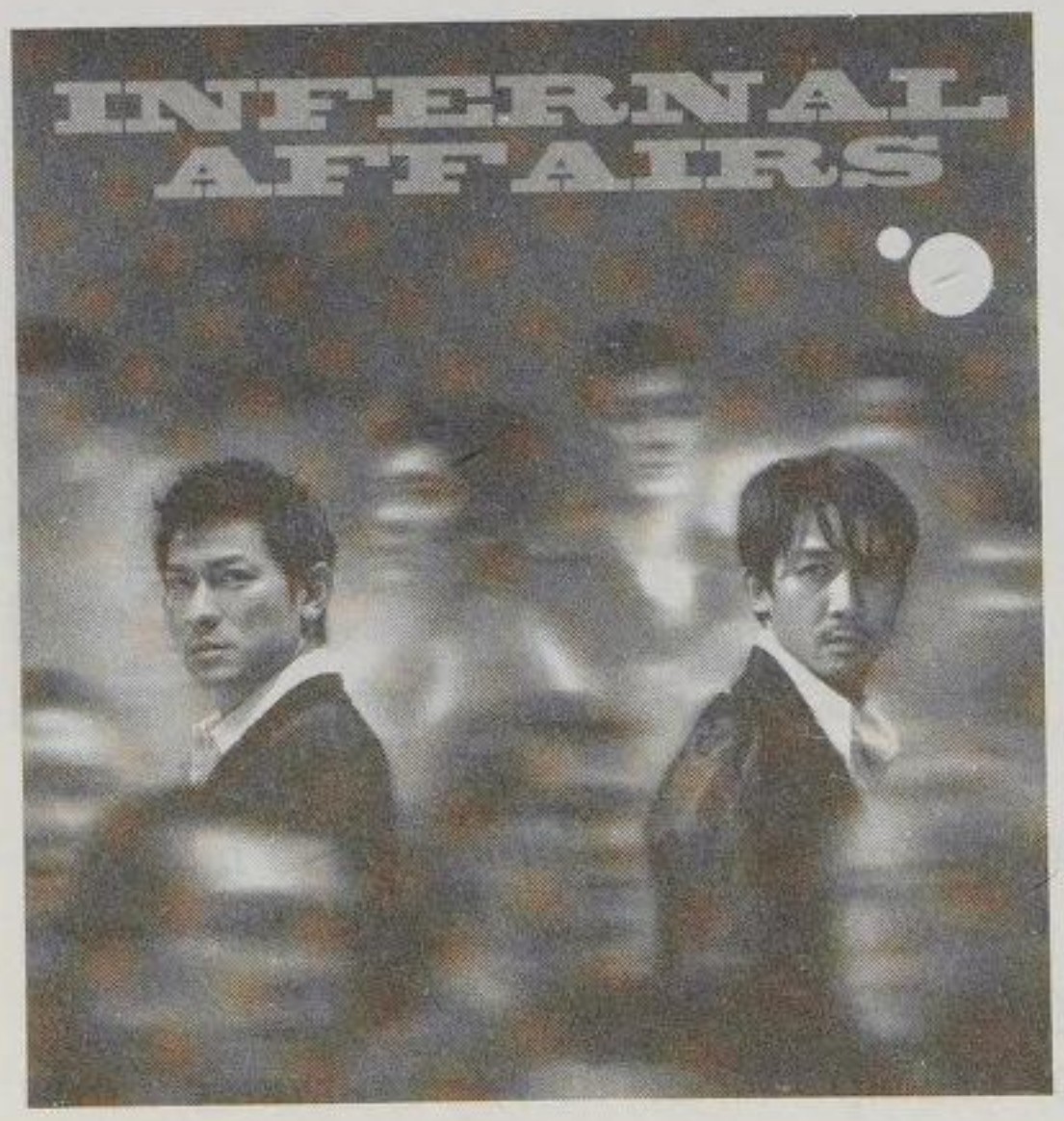
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
CANTONESE

**GENRE**
CRIME, THRILLER

*Infernal Affairs* is the complicated, grim and effortlessly cool story of two cops – one, in the police force, is a mole for the triad gang and the other, in the triad gang, is a mole for the police.

The two are mirror images of each other – tough men leading tough lives, which are essentially a lie. But both have lived them for so long that they can no longer tell what the truth is.

Directors Andrew Lau and Alan Mak create a sensational cat-and-mouse game that plays out in the streets and rooftops of a glittering Hong Kong. The slowly constructed suspense, as each man tries to uncover the other, is superb. As are the sudden spurts of violence. But the Machiavellian machinations are leavened by emotion.




Tony Leung, who plays the cop in the triad gang imbues his character with an exquisite exhaustion and sadness. His life has been ruined by his undercover identity but if he leaves it behind, who is he? *Infernal Affairs* was a blockbuster in Hong Kong and was remade in Hollywood by Martin Scorsese as *The Departed,* which won Oscars in 2006 for Best Picture and Best Director. But I recommend that you watch the original, which has an almost operatic melancholy. This is a genuinely thrilling gangster movie.

*Infernal Affairs is a very good example of why I love the Hong Kong Cinema.*
**– Martin Scorsese in the book *Hong Kong Culture: Word and Image***

**TRIVIA**

When the film was released in Hong Kong in late 2002, it grossed HK $51 mn (US$7.1 mn). Its success gave an unexpected boost to the down-in-the-dumps film industry.

# JAANE BHI DO YAARO (1983)

In an interview on the extra features of the *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* DVD, Kundan Shah labels the film 'hungry cinema' because, he says, most of the people who were making it 'were hungry'. The film was made under dire circumstances – in an interview Naseeruddin Shah called it 'the most nightmarish shoot of my life'. There was little money. The locations were rough. Invariably, Naseeruddin said, the 12-hour shifts were extended into 24.

But this madness wrought a film that remains one of the best satires made in this country. Kundan and his co-writers – Sudhir Mishra, Ranjit Kapoor, Satish Kaushik – blended many strains of comedy into a farcical theatre of the absurd. The climactic Mahabharat scene, in which Naseeruddin playing Duryodhan says: *Maine Draupadi ke cheer haran ka idea drop kar diya hai,* remains one of the funniest scenes ever created in Indian film. But the brilliance is that underneath the belly-aching laughs is a deep and abiding critique of India. This is the stuff of pure genius.

**DIRECTOR**
KUNDAN SHAH
**STARRING**
NASEERUDDIN SHAH, RAVI BASWANI, OM PURI
**RUNNING TIME**
132 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
COMEDY, SATIRE

*That's a test of great writing that it survives its time and stays relevant. It's frightening, in fact, to watch the film now and think how prescient it is.*

**– Naseeruddin Shah on The Front Row with Anupama Chopra**

## AWARDS

**Indira Gandhi Award** for Best First Film of a Director by Kundan Shah in 1984.

**Filmfare Award** for Best Comedian/Comedienne (Ravi Baswani) in 1984.

## TRIVIA

The entire film was made on the shoestring budget of ₹7,25,000.

# JULES ET JIM (1962)

**DIRECTOR**
FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT
**STARRING**
JEANNE MOREAU, OSKAR WERNER, HENRI SERRE
**RUNNING TIME**
105 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
FRANCE
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
FRENCH
**GENRE**
DRAMA, ROMANCE

*Jules et Jim* is one of the richest, most heartbreaking love stories in cinema. Based on a novel by Henri-Pierre Roché, it is the story of two best friends in love with the same girl. And what a girl Catherine is. Her face resembles a statue that both men are instantly attracted to. Her spirit is, by turns, fiery, ferocious, passionate and fundamentally, unknowable. So early in the film, she jumps into the Seine river. When Jim says he understands her, she firmly replies: "I don't want to be understood." At one point, Jim says: "She's an apparition, not a woman."

*Jules et Jim* has a wonderful lightness of being that becomes a slow ache as the characters age and life, inevitably frays all that was beautiful and good. American critic Andrew Sarris wrote, *Jules et Jim* celebrates 'the sweet pain of the impossible and the magnificent failure of an ideal'. It is a portrait of love that pierces your soul. So when Catherine describes her marriage with Jules to Jim, she says: "We were happy for a while but happiness didn't become part of us. We ended up face to face, not together." Jeanne Moreau's portrayal of Catherine is so nuanced that, like the men, we are fascinated and horrified by her. She is irresistible. As is this film.

*Catherine may be wrong-headed, as those who aspire to be free spirits often are, but she is devoid of hypocrisy, and she doesn't lie. Her absolutism is fascinating, but it is also, rather clearly, morally insane.*

**– Pauline Kael in *I Lost It At The Movies***

## AWARDS

Nominated for 2 **BAFTA Awards** for Best Film From Any Source (France) and Best Foreign Actress (Jeanne Moreau) in 1963.

## TRIVIA

When François Truffaut was a 23-year-old film critic, he read a first novel by a 74-year-old writer, Henri-Pierre Roché. "The book overwhelmed me," he later recalled, "and I wrote: If I ever succeed in making films, I will make *Jules et Jim*."

# JUNOON (1979)

*Junoon* could be titled Love in the Time of Revolt. Except in this love story, the man and woman never actually talk to each other.

He is a Pathan – an imposing, proud man rendered feeble by his obsession. She is a British beauty – tender, virginal and achingly child-like. The setting is the 1857 mutiny. India is burning but amidst the bloodshed and atrocities, the only thing Javed Khan, played by Shashi Kapoor, can think of is Ruth Labadoor, played by Nafisa Ali.

Adapted from Ruskin Bond's novella, *Flight of the Pigeons*, *Junoon* has great dramatic power. At the core of the story is an emotional tragedy that encompasses the unspeakable cruelties that human beings inflict upon each other and the futile losses that are suffered when men go to war. Amidst the madness, Javed Khan's love or lust (depending on your point of view) has little room to breathe before it is snuffed out.

These people are mere pawns, swept away by history. And yet they are memorable. Not just Javed Khan and Ruth but also Javed's bruised and angry wife Firdaus, played by Shabana Azmi, and Ruth's steely mother Mariam, who makes an unforgettable deal. She tells the pining Pathan: *Dilli apki toh Ruth bhi aapki.*

**DIRECTOR**
SHYAM BENEGAL
**STARRING**
SHASHI KAPOOR, JENNIFER KENDAL, NASEERUDDIN SHAH, SHABANA AZMI AND NAFISA ALI
**RUNNING TIME**
141 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
HISTORICAL DRAMA

The politics of a simmering subcontinent will decide their fate. Director Shyam Benegal, assisted by ace co-writers (dialogue by Satyadev Dubey and Ismat Chughtai), created a film with texture and layers. They demand that you pay attention to even the minor players, like Deepti Naval playing a hopeful, pregnant Muslim wife who at one point, sways on a garden swing and sings. She implores Ruth and Mariam to sing also. They do and the joy in their voices underscores their shared humanity. To watch *Junoon* is also to admire the courage of its producer and leading man Shashi Kapoor, who used his money and clout to pursue a new aesthetic. On every level, it's a brave film.

*When I saw* Junoon *for the second and the third time, I was moved by the way the romantic couple reacts to each other. Shashi Kapoor wants to possess her and Ruth which is Nafisa Ali is scared. I think this kind of economy of romantic expression is something that I admire so much that I won't be surprised if I've been influenced to do the same in my movies.*

**– Director Imtiaz Ali on the television show *Now Showing***

## AWARDS

6 **Filmfare Awards** in 1980 for Best Film (Shashi Kapoor), Best Director (Shyam Benegal), Best Cinematography (Govind Nihalani), Best Dialogue (Satyadev Dubey), Best Editor (Bhanudas Divakar) and Best Sound Recordist (Hitendra Ghosh).

Silver Lotus Award at the **National Film Awards** for Best Cinematography.

## TRIVIA

Nafisa Ali who played Ruth Labadoor was the last person to be cast for the film. The actress originally slated to play Ruth Labadoor walked out of the film two days before the shoot and Shashi Kapoor's son Kunal suggested he meet Ali.

# KABHI KABHIE (1976)

*Kabhi Kabhie* is one of my favourite love stories in Hindi cinema. And my favourite character in this epic multi-starrer is Vijay Khanna, a flamboyant, wonderfully generous man played by Shashi Kapoor. In one of the film's best moments, Khanna finally understands that his host – Amit, played by Amitabh Bachchan – was not just in college with his wife, Pooja, but also in love with her. Vijay confronts Amit but his only grievance is that Amit didn't tell him. After all, Vijay says, Pooja is so beautiful that any man would fall in love with her.

In *Kabhi Kabhie,* Yash Chopra, created a love story that spanned generations. The climax, which includes explosions and a headstrong runaway, is downright silly. But the preceding narrative, embellished with Khayyam's stunning soundtrack, more than makes up for it. The title track *Kabhi kabhie mere dil mein khayaal aata hai* became the romantic anthem of generations of Indians. This is a film with genuine emotion and pain. This is why Chopra is known as Hindi cinema's high priest of love.

**DIRECTOR**
YASH CHOPRA
**STARRING**
AMITABH BACHCHAN, SHASHI KAPOOR, RAKHEE
**RUNNING TIME**
178 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
DRAMA

*A love story I had been obsessed with and which had been haunting me for several years was the idea of* Kabhi Kabhie. *I often wondered what happened to lovers married to different partners. Life could either be happy or a compromise.*

**– Yash Chopra in *Amitabh Bachchan: The Legend***

## AWARDS

4 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Screenplay (Sagar Sarhadi), Best Playback Singer – Male (Mukesh – for the song *Kabhi kabhie mere dil mein*), Best Music Director (Khayyam) and Best Lyricist (Sahir Ludhianvi – for the song *Kabhi kabhie mere dil mein*).

## TRIVIA

Amitabh Bachchan's parents play Rakhee's parents in the *kanyadaan* (the giving of the girl in marriage) scene.

# KIKUJIRO (1999)

Takeshi Kitano, who has written this film and played the lead, is best known for bloody, hard-boiled Yakuza dramas. In this film too, he is a former gangster. But here, his big job is to take the nine-year-old, solemn-faced Masao to meet his mother, whom he has never seen. This road movie could have turned into a sentimental comedy but in the hands of Kitano, it has a sweet sadness and wisdom. Kikujiro is an inept, grumpy, reluctant guardian. He can't do anything right – he loses all their money at the race track; he can't drive well enough to steal a car; when he tries to swim, even with a floating tube, he almost drowns. But when Masao becomes sad, Kikujiro does everything he can to make him smile.

Kitano described *Kikujiro* as "a very strange film with my trademarks all over it." He said, "I hope to continue upsetting people's expectations in a positive way." *Kikujiro* is too long and indulgent but the adventures of this unlikely duo are charming. As is the lilting soundtrack composed by Joe Hisaishi. This odd, whimsical film will make you smile.

**DIRECTOR**
TAKESHI KITANO
**STARRING**
BEAT TAKESHI, YUSUKE SEKIGUCHI
**RUNNING TIME**
121 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
JAPAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
JAPANESE
**GENRE**
DRAMA, COMEDY

*My core activity is trying to avoid being pigeon-holed by the public. I am Takeshi Kitano, I am Beat Takeshi, and you can't tell what I'm going to do next. It keeps the public interested.*

**– Takeshi Kitano in *The Guardian***

## AWARDS

Nominated for the **Palme d'Or** (Takeshi Kitano) at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1999.

## TRIVIA

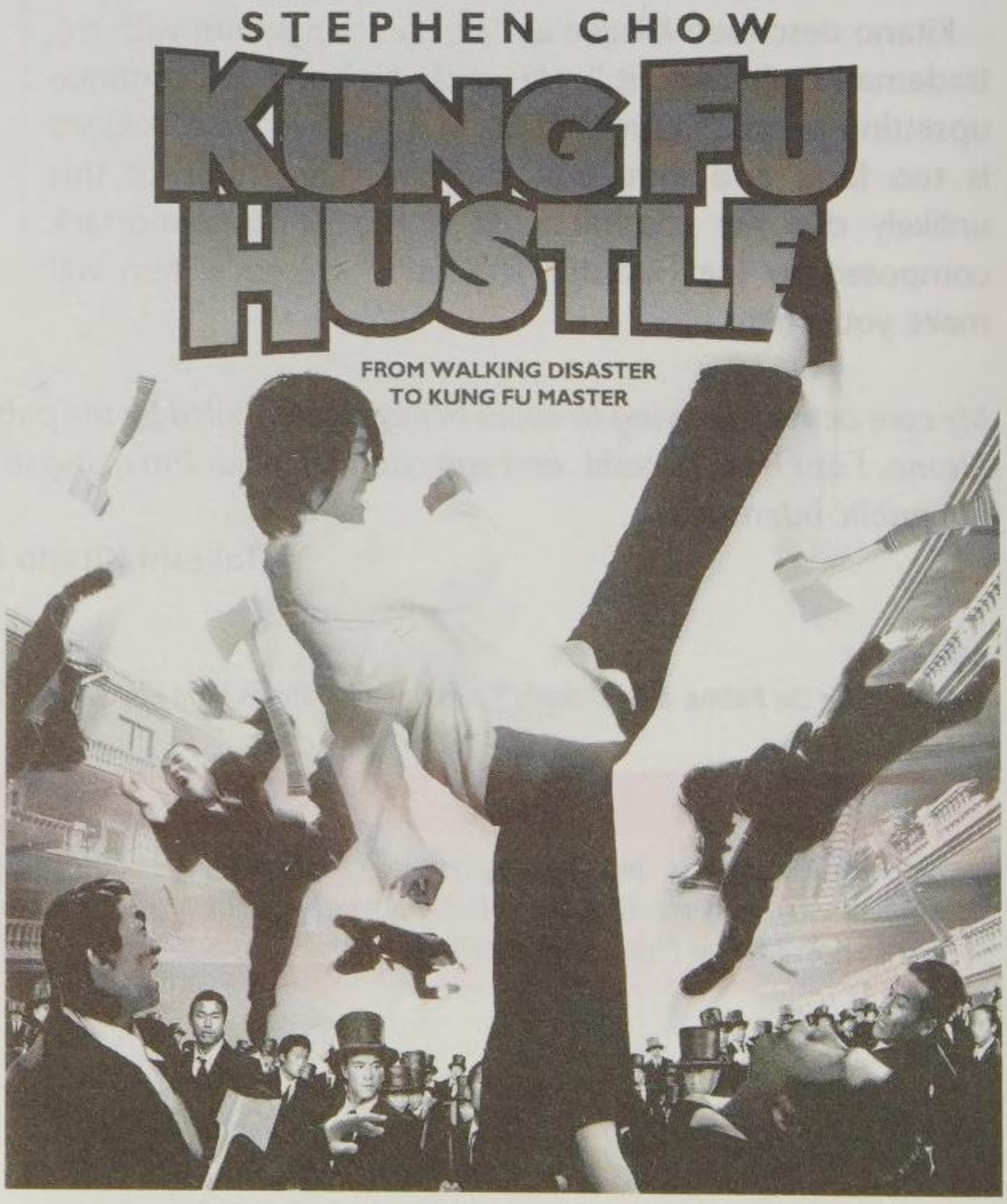
Director Kitano has said that his father – a housepainter and maker of lacquered objects who had many financial ups and downs because he gambled – was the inspiration for the film's title character.

# KUNG FU HUSTLE (2004)

**DIRECTOR**
STEPHEN CHOW
**STARRING**
STEPHEN CHOW, YUEN QIU, LEUNG SIU LUNG
**RUNNING TIME**
95 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
HONG KONG, CHINA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
CANTONESE
**GENRE**
ACTION, COMEDY

*Kung Fu Hustle* is one of those movies that cannot be described. It can only be experienced. Director-producer-actor-writer Stephen Chow has created a film that works without rules. Anything is possible here – so in 1940s China, we have the deadly Axe Gang, whose members kill! wearing spiffy suits and hats and also, for reasons unknown, do perfectly choreographed dance formations.

There's also a landlady who can scream loud enough to defeat the mightiest warriors. And my favourite: elegant but deadly blind assassins who send out murder weapons from a harp.



Chow plays Sing, a loser who aspires to be in the Axe Gang ("good guys never win, I want to be bad," he says) but then discovers that he has a higher calling. *Kung Fu Hustle* has scenes of startling violence but it also makes you laugh so hard that you ache – in one scene, Sing and his sidekick are attempting to kill but the knives they throw keep bouncing back and embedding themselves in Sing. Chow's staggering imagination and talent has created a new type of movie – in Hong Kong they call it *mo lei tau* or nonsense. But *Kung Fu Hustle* is inspired, exuberant nonsense. I've never seen anything like it.

*I put this idea into* Kung Fu Hustle, *a lot of people can't be judged by their appearance. They look so ordinary, but actually, they have their strengths.*

**– Director Stephen Chow to *The New York Times***

## AWARDS

Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the **Golden Globes** and the **BAFTA Awards** in 2006.

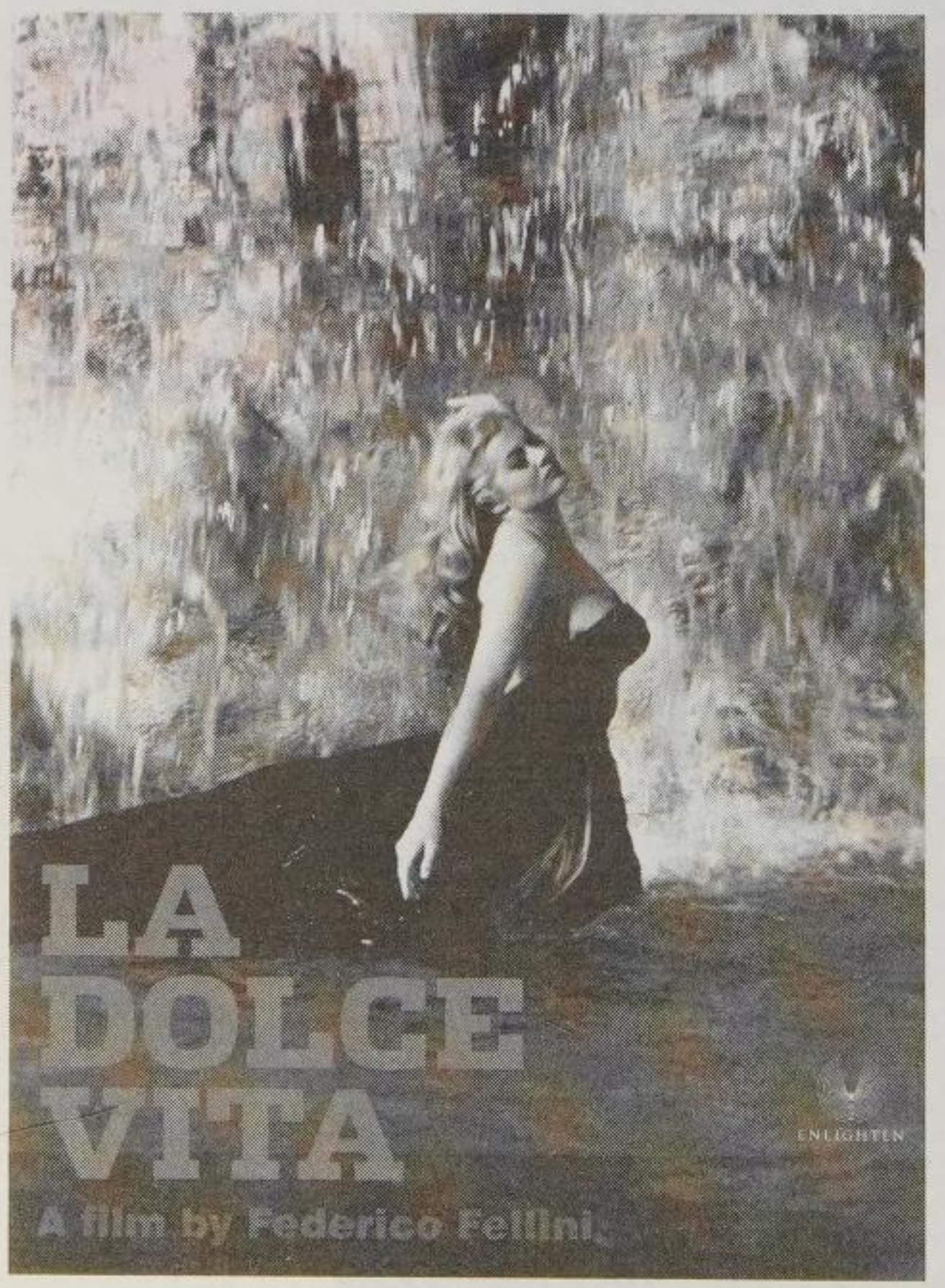
## TRIVIA

Director Stephen Chow found Yuen Qiu, who plays the landlady, completely by accident. She accompanied a friend to a casting call at his office and was sitting in the back, coolly reading a newspaper and smoking. He wondered who was the woman with the cigarette and it turned out that she used to be a stunt woman and had also appeared in a James Bond film.

# LA DOLCE VITA (1960)

**DIRECTOR**
FEDERICO FELLINI
**STARRING**
MARCELLO MASTROIANNI, ANITA EKBERG, ANOUK AIMÉE
**RUNNING TIME**
174 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
ITALY
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ITALIAN
**GENRE**
DRAMA

Anita Ekberg, impossibly voluptuous, sweetly sensual yet dangerously inviting, standing drenched in the Trevi fountain in Rome. There is perhaps no cinematic image that captures *La Dolce Vita* or the sweet life better than this. But the haunting tragedy of the film is that the sweet life is elusive and can never be captured. Marcello, a gossip columnist played by Mastroianni, desperately pursues it. He writes about the life of Rome's swish set – the rich playboys, movie stars, society beauties and assorted hangers-on, who fill the cafes and clubs of the Via Veneto. But his life is hollow. Marcello aches for something better – at one point he tries to finish writing his novel – but ultimately he proves too feeble. He remains just another cog in the incessantly grinding wheel of a decadent, celebrity culture. *La Dolce Vita* caused a furore when it released in 1960 equally offending all sections of society – the Vatican condemned it, especially for its iconic opening sequence in which a helicopter carries a statue of Christ above Rome. It was also banned in Spain until 1975. But the film won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and was a massive box office hit. It influenced generations of directors and introduced a new word into the English language: paparazzi, the term for intrusive, celebrity-chasing photographers, named after Paparazzo, Marcello's photographer-sidekick in the film.



*It is one of the most visually fluid movies ever made, a movie that approaches music in its rushing passion, not simply because Nino Rota's score is one of the best ever recorded, but because the characters seem to move with music within them (joyful, lustful, exciting, doubtful, sad).*

**– Roger Ebert, Film critic and author**

## AWARDS

**Palme d'Or** for Federico Fellini in 1960.

Won the **Academy Award** for Best Costume Design (Piero Gherardi) and was nominated for 3 other categories, including Best Director (Federico Fellini) and Best Writing, Story and Screenplay – Written Directly for the Screen (Ferderico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi) and Best Art Direction (Piero Gherardi).

## TRIVIA

The scene in the fountain was Anita Ekberg's own idea, encouraged by director Federico Fellini who wanted to satirize the cheap banality of social glitz.

# LAGAAN (2001)

**DIRECTOR**
ASHUTOSH GOWARIKER
**STARRING**
AAMIR KHAN, GRACY SINGH, PAUL BLACKTHORNE
**RUNNING TIME**
224 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI, ENGLISH, AVADHI
**GENRE**
DRAMA, ROMANCE

I still recall the sniggers and skepticism that greeted the first posters of *Lagaan*. This was a time when Hindi cinema was flogging the Yash Chopra – Karan Johar formula of rich, beautiful people, exotic foreign locations, designer labels and family values. The idea of a period film, featuring non-stars (except for hero and producer Aamir Khan) wearing *dhotis* and speaking with a sprinkling of Avadhi, was intriguingly mad. The fact that the plot hinged on a cricket match between oppressed villagers and a villainous British commandant, was madder still.

But *Lagaan* proved true its own dialogue – *Sach aur sahas hai jiske man mein, jeet usi ki hogi.* Despite its decidedly unglamorous characters and formidable running length, *Lagaan* was a commercial and critical triumph and went on to become only the third Indian film ever to be nominated for a best foreign film Oscar. Ashutosh Gowariker's supple story-telling brilliantly combined romance, heart-ache, drama and a breath-taking climax that has you holding your breath, even though all along, you know the good guys will win. *Lagaan* is a magical feel-good film and like all great sports movies, it isn't about the sport. This is Hindi cinema at its best!

*There was a certain degree of madness in me.*

**– Ashutosh Gowariker in the book *The Spirit of Lagaan***

## AWARDS

Nominated for an **Academy Award** for Best Foreign Language Film in 2002.

8 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Film, Best Director (Ashutosh Gowariker), Best Actor (Aamir Khan), Best Music Director (AR Rahman), Best Lyricist (Javed Akhtar – for the song *Radha kaise na jale*) Best Playback Singer Female (Alka Yagnik – for the song *O re chhori*), Best Playback Singer Male (Udit Narayan – for the song *O Mitwa*) and Best Story (Ashutosh Gowarikar) and was nominated for one more category.

5 **National Film Awards** for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment, Best Music Director (AR Rahman), Best Lyricist (Javed Akhtar – for the song *Radha kaise na jale* and *Ghanan ghanan*), Best Playback Singer Male (Udit Narayan – for the song *O Mitwa*) and Best Audiography (H Sridhar, Nakul Kamte).

## TRIVIA

The call sheet for one day included a list of ten thousand people, camels, horses, cattle, an elephant and more!

# LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (1962)

**DIRECTOR**
DAVID LEAN
**STARRING**
PETER O'TOOLE, ALEC GUINNESS, ANTHONY QUINN AND OMAR SHARIF
**RUNNING TIME**
216 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
UNITED KINGDOM
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
BIOGRAPHY, ADVENTURE

**TRIVIA**

When Peter O'Toole first met Sharif, O'Toole said, "Omar Sharif! No one in the world is called Omar Sharif." This was true, Sharif's real name was Michel Shalhoub.

If you plan to watch *Lawrence of Arabia* at home, on a small screen it is cinematic blasphemy. David Lean's magnificent saga of the British solider, who became a war hero in Arabia during World War I, is the original big screen movie. It is epic in every sense of the word – in scale, vision and the director's towering ambition. This is a three-hour plus film, so staggering in its beauty that it makes you gasp – the iconic shot of a speck on the horizon slowly becoming a man is breathtaking (note that this was done before CGI – there is only one shot in the entire film that was faked).

But *Lawrence of Arabia* is more than a visual feast. It's also, as Lean would say, 'a good yarn', about a man described both as 'a poet, a scholar, a mighty warrior,' and 'the most shameless exhibitionist since Barnum and Bailey'. T.E. Lawrence was a figure fraught with contradiction and complexity. Lean, his writers Robert Bolt and Michael Wilson and his lead actor Peter O' Toole, make him impossible to forget. "Nothing is written," Lawrence says, his eyes blazing. With this film, Lean proved that indeed it isn't. So a film so long that it required an interval, without any women or love or laughter, went on to become a box-office success and won seven Oscars. Treat the home viewing as an aperitif and make sure to see it in the cinema someday.

*I'm just interested in people who are nuts. I think they make very interesting characters. Lawrence is a fascinating character. This Oxford don on camelback. I mean, it was absolutely nutty.*

**– Director David Lean at the American Film Institute seminar**

## AWARDS

7 **Academy Awards** including Best Picture, Best Director (David Lean), Best Music, Score – Substantially Original (Maurice Jarre).

Nominated in 3 other categories for Best Actor in a Leading Role (Peter O'Toole), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Omar Sharif) and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium.

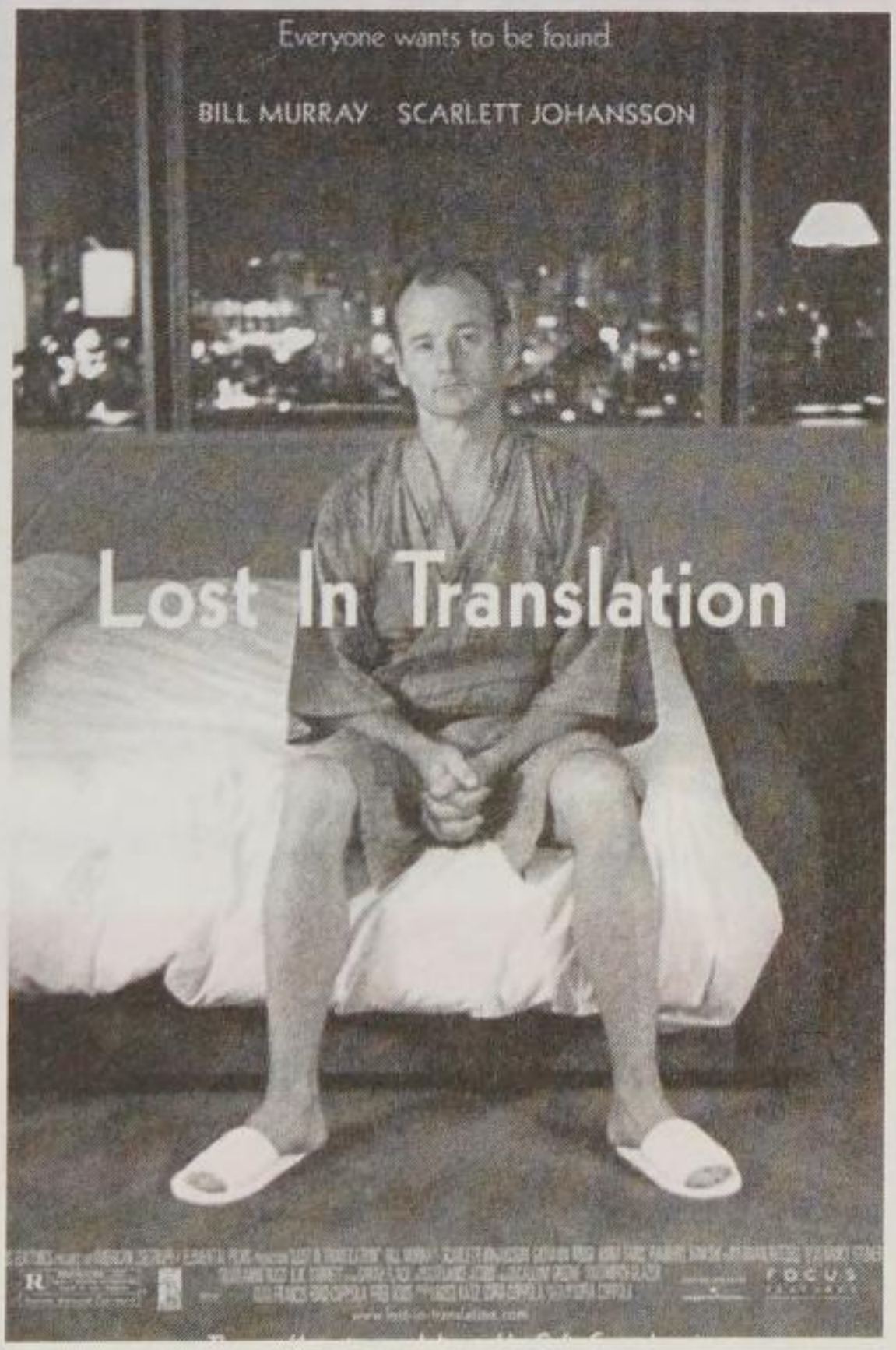
4 **BAFTA Awards** for Best British Actor (Peter O'Toole), Best British Film, Best British Screenplay (Robert Bolt) and Best Film from any Source.

# LOST IN TRANSLATION (2003)

*Lost in Translation* is one of those rare films that makes you laugh out loud and ache – all at once. The film is about two strangers in Tokyo. Bob is a movie star, in town to make a quick buck shooting a whisky commercial (the Japanese photographer instructs him – "I need more mysterious face"). Charlotte is in town with her photographer husband who works long hours and is largely oblivious to her loneliness (she says, "John is using these hair products. I don't know who I married"). These two bruised souls find a connection that isn't about sex or love. It's deeper and more wounded. When they part, he whispers something into her ear that we do not hear. Like me, you will spend a long time thinking about what he says.

**DIRECTOR**
SOFIA COPPOLA
**STARRING**
BILL MURRAY, SCARLETT JOHANSSON
**RUNNING TIME**
104 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA/JAPAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH, JAPANESE
**GENRE**
DRAMA

The film is centered by Bill Murray's superbly nuanced performance. His droll, dry wit is layered here with a profound sadness – the kind of melancholy that comes from being aware that your relationships, career, even children are tainted by compromise. His wife is merely a voice on the phone that insists that he make a choice on the colour of upholstery. Director Sofia Coppola creates perfect little portraits of Bob's dislocation – we see him in a lift, towering over shorter Japanese men, almost all in identical grey suits. And there is a marvellously funny sequence in which a prostitute sent to his room demands that he 'lip her stockings', (rip her stockings). *Lost in Translation* is bittersweet, poignant and deeply moving. It deserves to be seen, again and again.



*Bill (Murray) has an 800-number, and I left messages. This went on for five months. Stalking Bill became my life's work.*

**– Sofia Coppola in *The New York Times***

## AWARDS

Lina Mangiacapre Award for Sofia Coppola and the Upstream Prize for Best Actress by Scarlett Johansson at the **Venice Film Festiva**l in 2003.

**Academy Award** for Original Screenplay (Sofia Coppola) in 2004 and was nominated for 3 other awards, Best Picture, Best Director and Best Lead Actor (Bill Murray).

3 **BAFTA Awards** for Best Editing (Sarah Flack), Best Lead Actor (Bill Murray) and Best Lead Actress (Scarlett Johansson) and was also nominated for 5 other awards for Best Film Music, Best Cinematography, Best Original Screenplay, Best Director and Best Film.

3 **Golden Globes** for Best Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical, Best Actor – Comedy or Musical (Bill Murray) and Best Screenplay (Sofia Coppola) and was nominated for 2 other categories, Best Director (Sofia Coppola) and Best Actress – Comedy or Musical (Scarlett Johansson) also in 2004.

## TRIVIA

For the enigmatic end scene when Bob whispers something inaudibly into Charlotte's ear, director Sofia Coppola said she hadn't written a dialogue. That moment wasn't scripted.

# MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN, THE (1979)

*The Marriage of Maria Braun* begins, quite literally, with a bang. The film opens in World War II. Bombs rain down as Maria marries a soldier in the German army. As windows shatter, people start to flee but the bride and groom physically force the petrified registrar to marry them. The marriage lasts only a night and half a day. Maria's husband is sent to the Russian front. The film is about how Maria then skilfully and determinedly upgrades herself and evolves into 'the Mata Hari of the economic miracle'.

Maria Braun is one of the most compelling and layered female characters I've seen in film. She's cold, dangerously manipulative and cynical. But she's also feisty, seductive and ambitious. She arouses both admiration and fear. At one point, another character tells Maria: "Don't forget. It's always about money." But Maria isn't a simplistic gold-digger. There's something ineffably tragic about her rise and rise. Hanna Schygulla's masterful performance as Maria holds the film together so that it works as both, acerbic political comment and melodrama. This is a singularly unforgettable marriage.

**DIRECTOR**
RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER

**STARRING**
HANNA SCHYGULLA, KLAUS LOWITSCH, IVAN DESNY

**RUNNING TIME**
120 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
WEST GERMANY

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
GERMAN

**GENRE**
DRAMA

*With* The Marriage of Maria Braun, *Fassbinder has broken out of the ivory tower of the cinephiles.*

**– François Truffaut in *Cahiers du cinema***

## AWARDS

Reader Jury of the Berliner Morgenpost and Best Actress (Hanna Schygulla) and Outstanding Single Achievement to the whole team at the **Berlin International Film Festival** in 1979.

Nominated for Best Foreign Film at the **Golden Globe** in 1980.

## TRIVIA

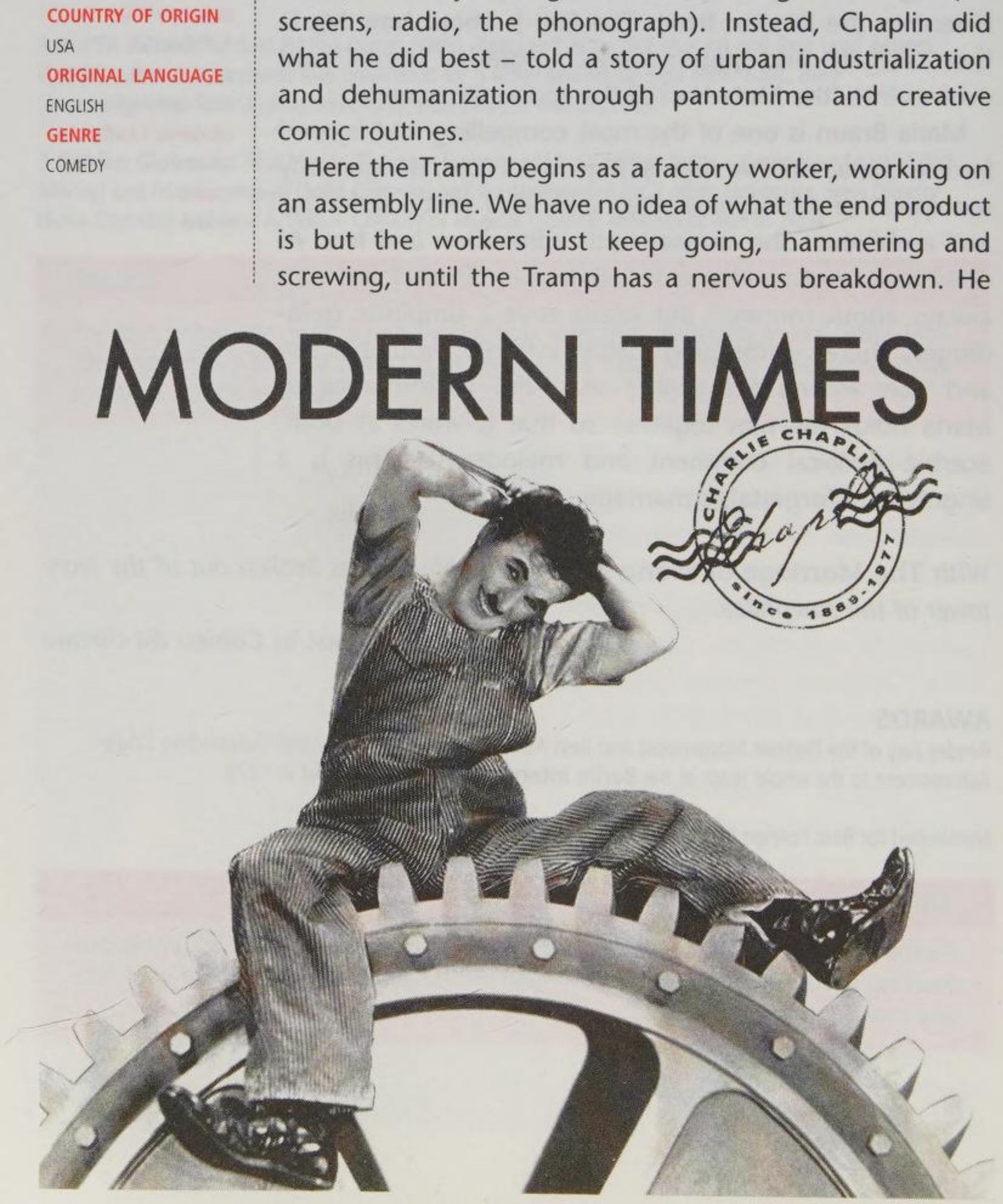
Fassbinder and Schygulla worked on 20 films together and had a tumultuous working relationship. At one point he told her "I can't stand the sight of your face any more. You bust my balls."

# MODERN TIMES (1936)

**DIRECTOR**
CHARLIE CHAPLIN
**STARRING**
CHARLIE CHAPLIN,
PAULETTE GODDARD
**RUNNING TIME**
87 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY

*Modern Times* was the last time Charlie Chaplin's Tramp – one of cinema's most beloved characters – was seen on screen. It was also the first time we heard the Tramp. Toward the end, he sings a song with gibberish lyrics. Hollywood, by now, had switched to sound, but in *Modern Times,* the only talking was done through machines (TV screens, radio, the phonograph). Instead, Chaplin did what he did best – told a story of urban industrialization and dehumanization through pantomime and creative comic routines.

Here the Tramp begins as a factory worker, working on an assembly line. We have no idea of what the end product is but the workers just keep going, hammering and screwing, until the Tramp has a nervous breakdown. He



then attempts to find work in a department store, in a shipyard and finally as a singing waiter. Parts of this film are laugh-out-loud funny (my favourite is an automatic feeding machine that dispenses with workers having to take lunch breaks). But the genius of Chaplin is that the laughs come tinged with tears. There's one particularly heartbreaking moment when the Tramp is being released from jail. "Can't I stay a little longer?" he asks the cop, "I'm so happy here." Poet Vachel Lindsay, who was also one of America's first film critics once said: "The cinema IS Chaplin." *Modern Times* explains why.

*Unemployment is the vital question ... Machinery should benefit mankind. It should not spell tragedy and throw it out of work.*

**– Charlie Chaplin to a newspaper in 1931**

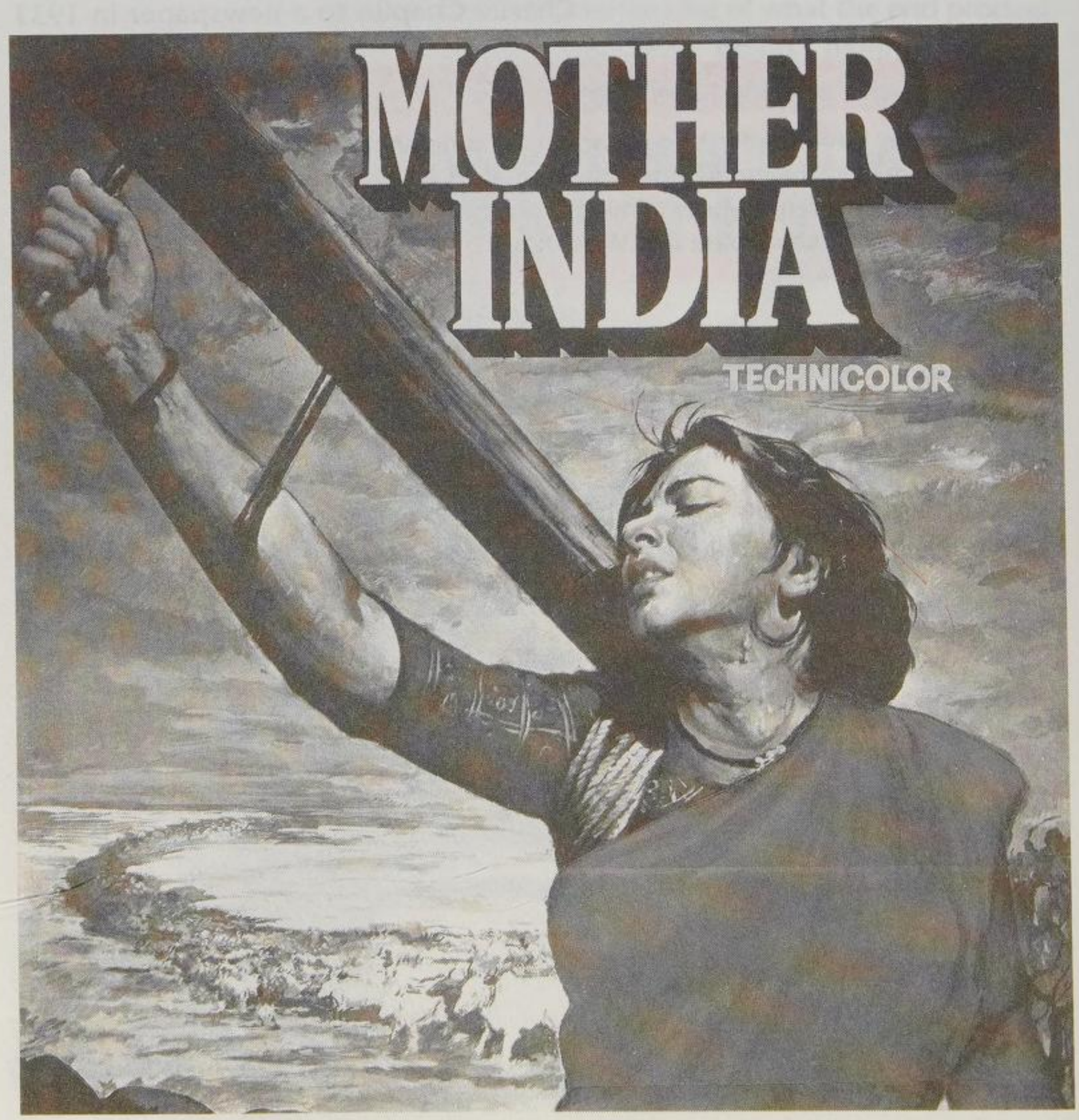
**TRIVIA**

Walt Disney bought advertising space in the programme at the film's premiere at the Grauman's Chinese Theater on February 12, 1936, 'In appreciation of the pantomimist supreme whose inimitable artistry and craftsmanship are timeless'. It was signed, 'Mickey Mouse and Walt Disney'.

# MOTHER INDIA (1957)

**DIRECTOR**
MEHBOOB KHAN
**STARRING**
NARGIS, SUNIL DUTT, RAJENDRA KUMAR
**RUNNING TIME**
172 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
DRAMA

*Mother India* is unarguably the most influential Hindi film ever made. This epic story of a mother who sacrifices everything to raise her two sons, only to eventually murder one of them, has given Hindi cinema its most enduring themes: the eternally suffering, iconic mother figure (who has persisted over the decades – *Deewaar, Ram Lakhan, Karan Arjun,* even the silks-and-pearls mother of *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*); the rebellious son who she actually loves more; the importance of societal good over individual gain. Radha is mother earth. She endures and nurtures, irrespective of her circumstances.



Incredibly, Nargis was only 28 when she played Radha, ageing from a nervous young bride to a weathered old woman who can barely hear. Her performance drives the film, which has lost none of its power. Even today, her anguish for her starving children, her desperation as she offers herself in exchange for a handful of grain to the lascivious Sukhilala, her resolve when she kills her beloved Birju, is palpable. *Mother India* was the first Indian film ever to be nominated for a foreign film Oscar – it lost by one vote to Federico Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*. I think any understanding of Hindi cinema begins with this film.

*Nargis' character in* Mother India *(1957) had everything: it had guts and it had grit without losing any appeal as a woman. It gave rise to a very universal feeling: you went out all the way for her, felt for her – as a wife when she loses her husband; as a mother who loves her boy, but the naughtier boy more. The son feels things are not the way they should be but she is following certain principles. She has tremendous love for her son but cannot compromise her principles which, at that time was very path-breaking. It was a mind-blowing performance.*

**– Ramesh Sippy to *Tehelka* magazine**

## AWARDS

The first Indian film to be nominated in 1958 for an **Academy Award** for Best Foreign Language Film.

5 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Actress (Nargis), Best Cinematographer (Faredoon A. Irani), Best Director (Mehboob Khan), Best Sound Recordist (R Kaushik) and Best Film.

## TRIVIA

The film's publicity said: "The grain of rice on your table does not tell the grim tale of the toil that grew it."

# MUGHAL-E-AZAM (1960)

**DIRECTOR**
K. ASIF
**STARRING**
PRITHVIRAJ KAPOOR, DILIP KUMAR, MADHUBALA
**RUNNING TIME**
173 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
URDU
**GENRE**
HISTORICAL, ROMANCE

This romance between the prince and the court dancer is one of the best Indian films ever made. With its powerful performances, thunderous father-son confrontations, poetic dialogue and spectacular song and dance sequences, *Mughal-e-Azam* is the apotheosis of the Hindi film form. *Mughal-e-Azam,* at one time the most expensive film made in India, has an epic scale.

There are big battle scenes, huge palace sets and landmark dance sequences, including *Pyar kiya toh darna kya.* But the film endures because it also has emotional heft. The battle between a father bound by his duty as emperor and a son, sunk in love, is genuinely moving.

*Mughal-e-Azam* is also a case of perfect casting. Dilip Kumar's melancholic beauty matches Madhubala's sublime, almost other-worldly perfection. Together they create one of the most erotic scenes in Hindi cinema – when the prince caresses his lover's face with a feather.

One request: watch *Mughal-e-Azam* in the original black-and-white version rather than the recent colourized one. That is a far richer experience.

Mughal-e-Azam *is the mother of all films. Mothers cannot be remade.*

**– Producer Shah Rukh Khan at the unveiling of a documentary on the making of the film *Mughal-e-Azam: A Tribute from Akbar Asif to K Asif***

## AWARD

**Filmfare award** for Best Film and was also nominated for Best Director (K Asif) and Best Actress (Madhubala) in 1961.

## TRIVIA

In 1960, at Maratha Mandir, the tickets were sold for ₹100 in black when the normal rate was just ₹1.50.

# NIGHT WATCH (2004)

*Night Watch* is a somewhat insane, occasionally incomprehensible film based on a five-book series by the Russian author Sergei Lukyanenko. The story, marvellously convoluted and dense, revolves around the 1000-year-old truce between the Warriors of Light and the Warriors of Darkness, who keep a watch on each other. These beings called 'Others', include witches, vampires and shape-shifters. This fragile peace is broken with the arrival of the 'Great One', an 'Other' who will shift the balance of power forever. And there's also an attractive blonde doctor with a curse that is creating a vortex of evil and lots and lots of crows.

Confused? I was too. So why am I asking you to watch this film? Because it's stylish and audacious. Bekmambetov (who then went on to direct the Angelina Jolie-starrer *Wanted*) doesn't have a timid bone in his body. The action moves at a furious pace with the camera snaking down subway tunnels, into people's skulls and gloomy Moscow buildings. At one point, the leader of the Dark side, pulls his spine out and creates a sword out of it. It's great fun because you really have no idea what is coming next. How many films can you say that for?

**DIRECTOR**
TIMUR BEKMAMBETOV
**STARRING**
KONSTANTIN KHABENSKIY,
VLADIMIR MENSHOV,
MARIA POROSHINA
**RUNNING TIME**
114 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
RUSSIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
RUSSIAN
**GENRE**
ACTION, FANTASY

*It's the first horror/fantasy movie in Russia. Nobody wanted to see scary movies because we have such a scary past.*

**– Director Timur Bekmambetov on the DVD featurette for the film**

**TRIVIA**

The film, which cost about $3.5 mn to make (an extravagant sum then), earned $16 mn at the Russian box office, breaking the record previously held by *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, which made $14.9 mn.

# NORTH BY NORTHWEST (1959)

**DIRECTOR**
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
**STARRING**
CARY GRANT, EVA MARIE SAINT, JAMES MASON
**RUNNING TIME**
136 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
ACTION, MYSTERY

Sometime in 1957, the writer Ernest Lehman said to Alfred Hitchcock that he wanted 'to do a Hitchcock picture to end all Hitchcock pictures.' The film they made was *North by Northwest,* about a slick ad man, played by Cary Grant, who is kidnapped in the midst of a business meeting.

He finds himself caught in a swirl of bewildering events that include a mysterious microfilm, murder, a gorgeous blonde who seduces him on a train, and a climactic chase across the faces of presidents in Mount Rushmore.

While shooting, Grant thought the script was 'terrible'. He told Hitchcock, "We've already done a third of the picture and I still can't make head or tail of it." Which was a perfect fit to play a character, who has no idea of what is going on. On revisiting the film, you will find that the plot is more frantic than layered. *North by Northwest* moves at such a fast pace and has such breathtaking sequences, including the iconic chase through a cornfield that we barely notice that Hitchcock isn't giving us time to think (for example, we never find out what the sensitive documents on the microfilm actually are). This is the Master, playing as he put it, the audience like a piano.

*I have never been interested in making films about professional criminals or detectives. I much prefer to take average men, because I think the audience can get involved more easily.*

**– Director Alfred Hitchcock at the American Film Institute's seminar in 1972**

## AWARDS

Nominated for 3 **Academy Awards** in 1960 including Best Writing, Story and Screenplay – Written Directed for the Screen (Ernest Lehman).

## TRIVIA

In François Truffaut's book-length interview, *Hitchcock/Truffaut* (1967), Hitchcock said that MGM wanted *North by Northwest* cut by 15 minutes so the film's length would run under two hours. Hitchcock had his agent check his contract, learned that he had absolute control over the final cut, and refused.

# NOSFERATU, A SYMPHONY OF HORROR (1922)

*Nosferatu* is the original vampire movie. Director F. W. Murnau based the film on Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* but changed the title and character names – a move that resulted in litigation and a court order that all prints be destroyed. Thankfully, prints in Germany survived. *Nosferatu* feels like a delirious nightmare. Murnau combines expressionism and realism to create a genuinely chilling portrait of evil. The vampire here has none of the sexual magnetism of later screen interpretations – with bulging eyes, bat ears and rat-like teeth, *Nosferatu* is definitely not the ancestor of the elegant bloodsuckers in the *Twilight* movies. He is repulsive, a symbol of pestilence and disease. Interestingly, Nosferatu was played by a character actor named Max Schreck, whose surname actually means fright in German.

*Nosferatu* is a 90-year-old film but it still has the power to engage you. I especially enjoyed some of the title cards: when Nosferatu sees the photograph of a lovely young woman, all he notices is her beautiful neck. And early on, a man tells the lead character who is running: "Do not hurry, my young friend. Nobody can escape his destiny." Indeed!

*I'm convinced that there's no better German film than* Nosferatu.

**– Werner Herzog in an interview to Roger Ebert, Film critic and author**

**DRECTOR**
F.W. MURNAU

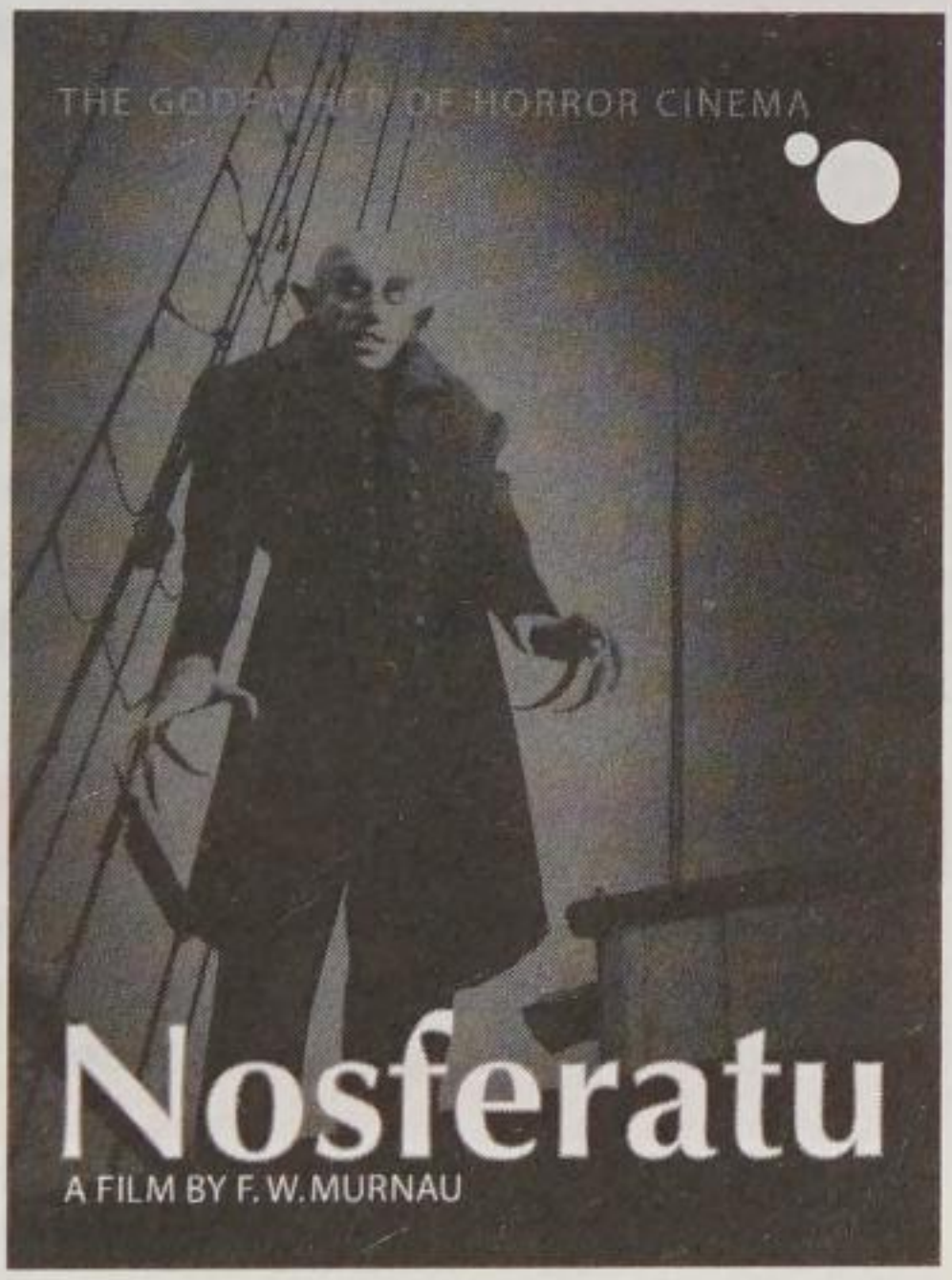
**STARRING**
MAX SCHRECK, GUSTAV VON WANGENHEIM, GRETA SCHRODER

**RUNNING TIME**
94 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
GERMANY (WEIMAR REPUBLIC)

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
GERMAN INTERTITLES

**GENRE**
HORROR




**TRIVIA**

The word *Nosferatu* is Romanian for undead.

# OLDBOY (2003)

**DIRECTOR**
PARK CHAN-WOOK
**STARRING**
CHOI MIN-SIK, YU JI-TAE, KANG YYE-JEONG
**RUNNING TIME**
120 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
SOUTH KOREA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
KOREAN
**GENRE**
MYSTERY, THRILLER

*Oldboy* is a film so perversely twisted that it will thoroughly mess with your mind. There is much here to make you flinch – at one point, the protagonist bites into a live octopus. At another, the claw-end of a hammer is used to extract teeth and at another, a neatly severed hand arrives in a box. So why should you see it?

Because *Oldboy* is a frenzied fever dream of a Kafkaesque hell. One fine day, a man is kidnapped. He wakes up to find himself in a bedroom with nothing but a television for company. He is kept here for 15 years and then just as suddenly, let out and asked to figure out why he was imprisoned.

The movie is a dark puzzle – as the pieces fit together, the horror ramps up. It's also virtuoso filmmaking with memorable scenes of choreographed mayhem. Inhale deep and watch.

*It is a powerful film not because of what it depicts, but because of the depths of the human heart which it strips bare.*

**– Roger Ebert in his review of the film**

## AWARDS

Won Grand Prize of the Jury at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 2004 and was also nominated for a **Palme d'Or**.

## TRIVIA

Lead actor Choi Min-Sik ate an actual live octopus for a critical scene in the film. It was particularly difficult for him because he is a Buddhist. So before every take he would pray to the octopus offering it his apology. The scene took four takes.

# PAN'S LABYRINTH (2006)

*Pan's Labyrinth* is such an audacious, ambitious and visually stunning film that it takes your breath away. Writer-director Guillermo Del Toro combines fantasy and reality so seamlessly that at the end, you don't know what the truth is but it hardly matters. *Pan's Labyrinth* is horrific and deeply disturbing but it also makes you believe in fairy tales.

The story is set in Spain in 1944. A young girl moves into a remote district with her pregnant mother who has remarried. The new husband is a sadistic military captain who is only interested in the heir that the mother will bear him. He brutally hunts down resistance fighters who are hiding in the forests around the army camp. Ofelia, a beautiful, intelligent girl who hates her stepfather, discovers a magical, subterranean kingdom. She is told that she is a lost princess who must successfully finish three tasks before she is allowed to return. These tasks bring her face to face with memorable creatures, including the Pale Man, who has eyes in the palms of his hands. The fantasy world is frightening but Del Toro firmly establishes that the worst villains here are human beings – the Captain's cruelty has no limits. Words however, cannot convey the magical textures and layers of this film. *Pan's Labyrinth* must be experienced.

**DIRECTOR**
GUILLERMO DEL TORO

**STARRING**
IVANA BAQUERO, SERGI LOPEZ, MARIBEL VERDÚ

**RUNNING TIME**
119 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
SPAIN/MEXICO

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
SPANISH

**GENRE**
DRAMA, FANTASY

## TRIVIA

Director Guillermo Del Toro returned his entire salary for *Pan's Labyrinth,* because he insisted on creature effects that his financers considered too expensive.

*It's the movie I've done that I like the most, that most resembles the things I thought I would do when I began directing.*

**– Director Guillermo Del Toro at the Cannes International Film Festival**

## AWARDS

Nominated for the **Palme D'Or** in 2006 at the **Cannes Film Festival**.

Also nominated for 6 **Academy Awards** including Best Foreign Film (Mexico) and Best Original Screenplay (Guillermo del Toro) and won 3 for Best Achievement in Art Direction (Eugenio Caballero, Pilar Revuelta), Best Achievement in Cinematography (Guillermo Navarro) and Best Achievement in Makeup (David Marti, Montse Ribe).

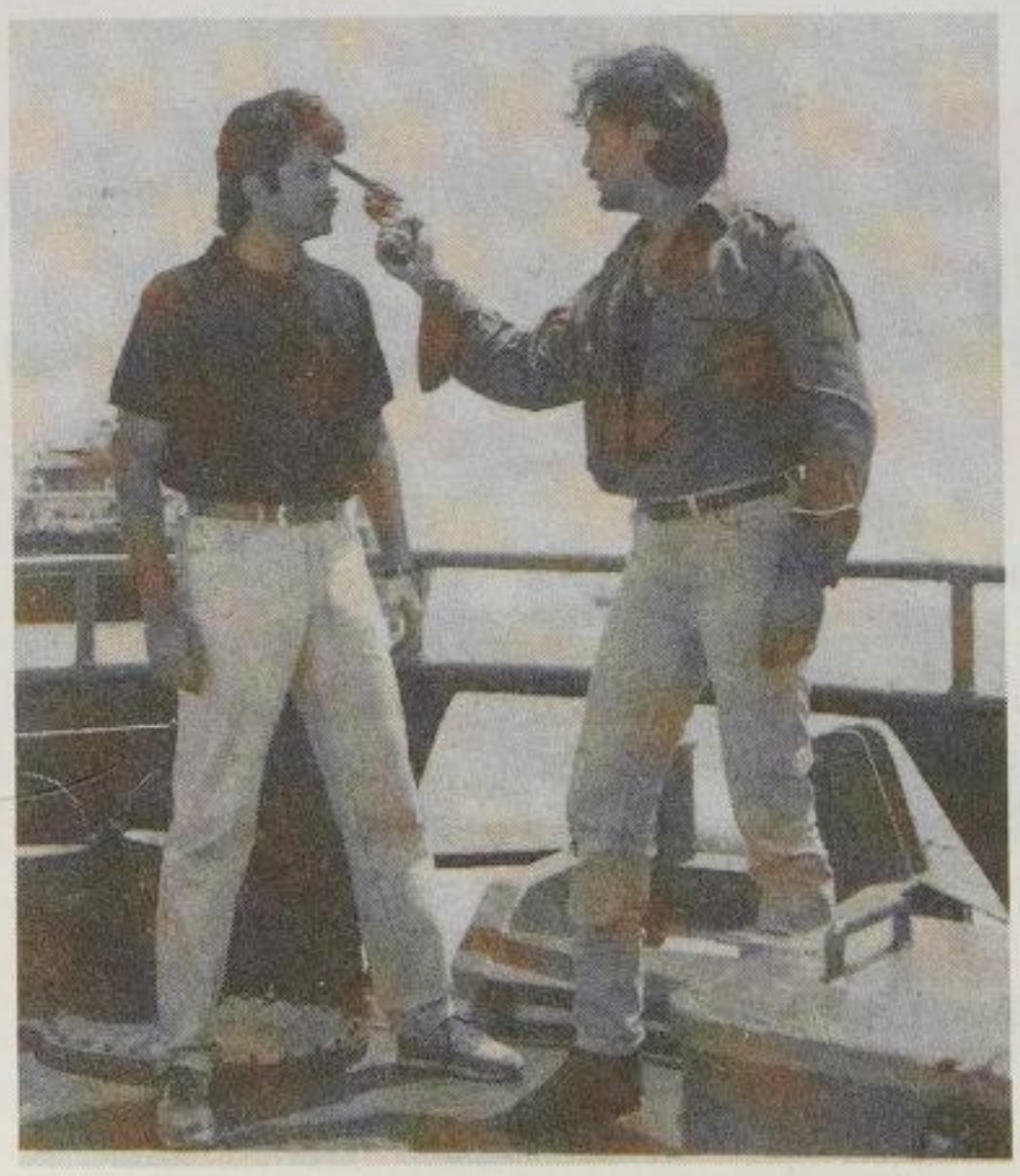
Best Film not in the English Language at the **BAFTA Awards** along with 2 other awards in different categories.

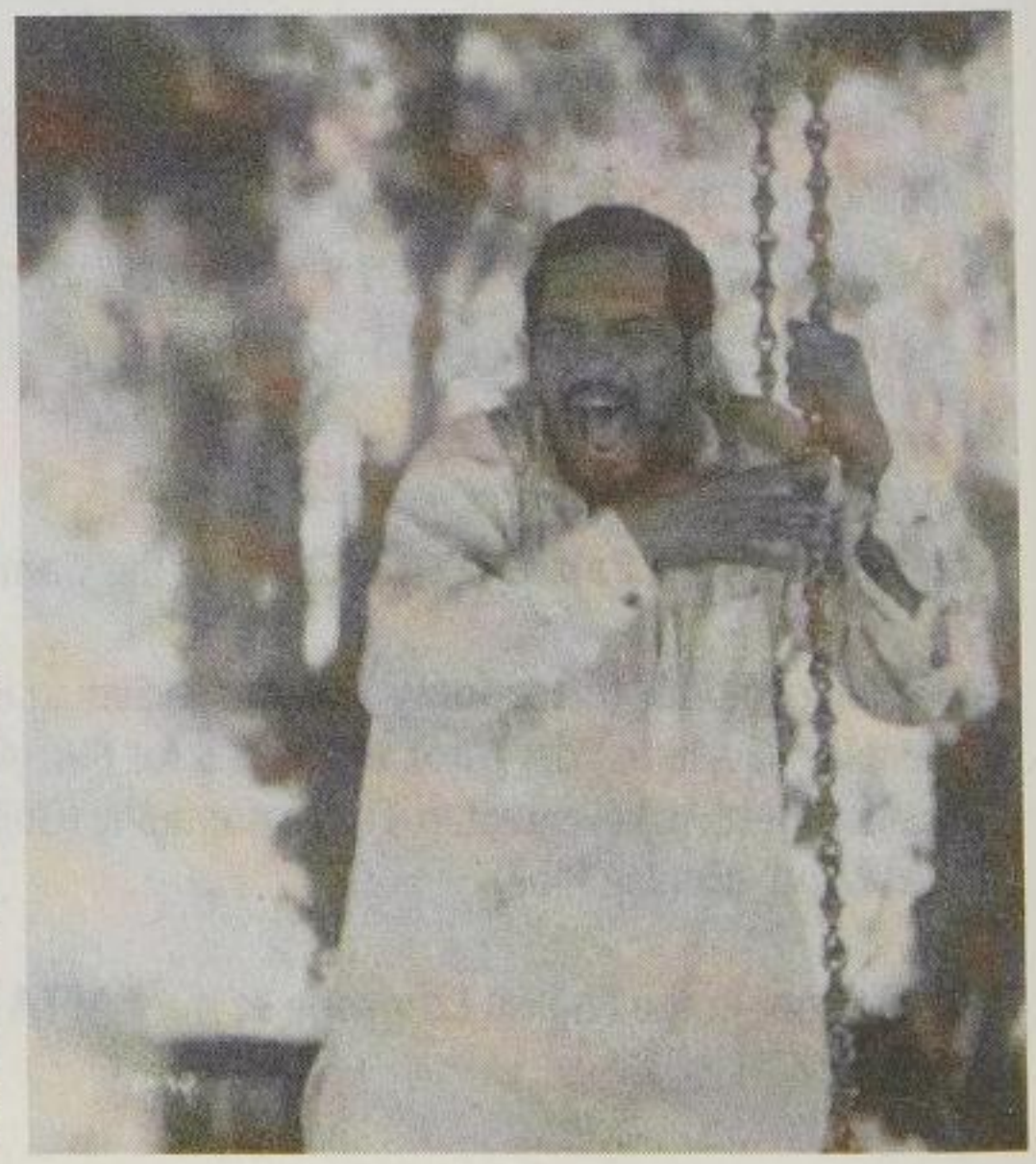
# PARINDA (1989)

**DIRECTOR**
VIDHU VINOD CHOPRA
**STARRING**
ANIL KAPOOR, JACKIE SHROFF, MADHURI DIXIT, NANA PATEKAR
**RUNNING TIME**
129 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
CRIME, DRAMA

Full disclosure: I'm married to the director so this recommendation does toot the family horn but I couldn't resist. *Parinda* is the original Mumbai gangster noir – a film about two brothers who become embroiled in the city's underworld. The older one sacrifices himself to give his younger brother a better life. The younger brother voluntarily joins the gang to avenge his best friend's death.

The story wasn't particularly new but the telling had such urgency and force that the film doesn't seem dated even today. My favourite character is Anna, the psychotic don who may or may not have burned his wife and child to death. Nana Patekar was so effectively vicious that he made subsequent villains seem effete in comparison. The cinematography, by Binod Pradhan, and the editing, by the late Renu Saluja, helped to construct a vividly tragic vision of Mumbai. Incredibly, the film wasn't a commercial success – the Punjab distributor complained that viewers believed that the climactic, wedding bed murder was a dream sequence and were angered when they discovered that there wasn't going to be a happy ending. But over the years, viewers discovered *Parinda* and it endures as a cult film.





*When I made my first major film,* Parinda, *it flopped. That was the first time big stars die before the climax. I was trying to say why violence does not pay. But today,* Parinda *is considered a cult film."*

**– Vinod Chopra to *The Hindu***

## AWARDS

5 **Filmfare Awards** for Best Director (Vidhu Vinod Chopra), Best Actor (Jackie Shroff), Best Editing (Renu Saluja), Best Screenplay (Shivkumar Subramaniam) and Best Supporting Actor (Nana Patekar) in 1989.

2 **National Film Awards** for Best Supporting Actor (Nana Patekar) and Best Editing (Renu Saluja).

## TRIVIA

In the opening scene of the film, the dead body Anna and his crew try to dispose in the factory was actually director Vidhu Vinod Chopra.

# PLAYER, THE (1992)

**DIRECTOR**
ROBERT ALTMAN
**STARRING**
TIM ROBBINS, GRETA SCACCHI, WHOOPI GOLDBERG, PETER GALLAGHER
**RUNNING TIME**
124 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
SATIRE

*The Player* is Robert Altman's poison love letter to Hollywood. The legendary director, whose films like *Nashville* and *MASH* defined the *auteur* driven 1970s, was cast out of the industry through most of the 1980s. His films flopped and the studios decided that they had had enough of his iconoclastic style and over-lapping dialogue. In 1992, Altman returned with *The Player,* which is one of the sharpest and funniest satires on showbiz ever made. Adapted by Michael Tolkin from his own novel, *The Player* is about a top-rung studio executive Griffin Mill, played by Tim Robbins. Mill is ostensibly a Master of the Universe but behind the cool façade, his life is crumbling. A younger, more glib executive is sniping at his job. The studio is rife with rumours of Mill's firing and he is receiving death threats from a writer, one of the many that he promised to 'get back to' but never did. One post-card reads: "In the name of all writers, I'm going to kill you." It's a sentiment, I'm sure, that many Bollywood writers will connect with.

Altman skewers everyone in his frame. He brilliantly portrays the hypocrisy, the politics and the corruption of showbiz – so a writer who is adamant to make his film with 'real people' succumbs to the lure of stars because of course, they test better in middle America. At one point, Mill gives a rousing speech on movies being an art form but the films he is actually considering making includes one described as *Out of Africa* meets *Pretty Woman*. *The Player* opens with an incredible eight-minute tracking shot that tells you all that you need to know about the movie business. Watch it and watch it again to get all the clever references and catch all the cameos – among them Julia Roberts, Bruce Willis, Harry Belafonte, Anjelica Huston and Nick Nolte.

*Looking back on this picture, it is a pretty tame satire. This is no big indictment. Things are much, much worse than this picture seems to say. The truth of the matter is I cannot make the kind of movies Hollywood wants to make. The kind of movies that I like to make, and can make, and make are not the kind of films*

*they know how to distribute. So we basically aren't in the same business. There's no point in calling me to make a pair of gloves for you when I make shoes.*

**– Director Robert Altman on the DVD commentary of the film**

## AWARDS

Nominated for 3 **Academy Awards** for Best Director (Robert Altman), Best Film Editing (Geraldine Peroni) and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published (Michael Tolkin).

2 **BAFTA Awards** for Best Direction and Best Screenplay – Adapted (Michael Tolkin).

Won Best Actor (Tim Robbins) and Best Director at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1992 and was also nominated for a **Palme d'Or**.

The **Golden Globe** in 1993 for Best Motion Picture – Comedy/Musical and Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Comedy/Musical (Tim Robbins).

## TRIVIA

The opening sequence is 8 minutes and 5 seconds long and refers to another famous film with a long opening shot, Orson Welles' *A Touch of Evil*.

# PULP FICTION (1994)

**DIRECTOR**
QUENTIN TARANTINO
**STARRING**
JOHN TRAVOLTA, SAMUEL L. JACKSON, BRUCE WILLIS, UMA THURMAN
**RUNNING TIME**
154 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
CRIME, THRILLER

**TRIVIA**

Tarantino spent almost a year in Amsterdam while promoting *Reservoir Dogs* (1991) and writing a 500-page first draft. Hence Vincent Vega's detailed knowledge of Amsterdam minutiae.

"*Garçon*, coffee!" In themselves, these words don't convey much. But spoken by a twitchy robber in a banal, suburban American diner, they become the stuff of comedy. That is the brilliance of *Pulp Fiction*. The words, written by Quentin Tarantino and Roger Avary, ricochet off the frame like bullets. They are biting, slicing, absurd and shockingly funny. Even in repeat viewings, I laughed out loud as the killers Jules and Vincent discuss the impropriety of foot massages and what Quarter Pounders are called in France. This of course, right before they 'get into character,' walk into an apartment and brutally shoot two people.

In *Pulp Fiction*, humour and murder are bedfellows. Tarantino takes you from achingly funny to horrifically violent scenes. The characters, dialogue and situations are fiercely original – it's a circular structure but you can't guess what leads where. And the performances are outstanding – from Vincent, the charming goofball killer played by John Travolta to Mia, the ditzy don's wife, played by Uma Thurman. Not to mention an unforgettable cameo by Christopher Walken and Harvey Keitel as the elegant clean-up artist Mr Wolf (as in "I'm Mister Wolf. I solve problems"). *Pulp Fiction* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes International Film Festival and was labelled by some critics as the most influential film of the decade. Almost twenty years later, it's still inspiring directors to go dark and wickedly funny.

*Because movies are so characterless these days – basically film versions of situation comedies – I like to work in a genre while subverting it from the inside. I like to work against an audience's usual expectations.*

**– Quentin Tarantino in *Los Angeles Times***

## AWARDS

**Palme D'Or** at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1994.

**Academy Award** for Writing (Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen) – Quentin Tarantino and Roger Avary and was nominated in 8 other categories.

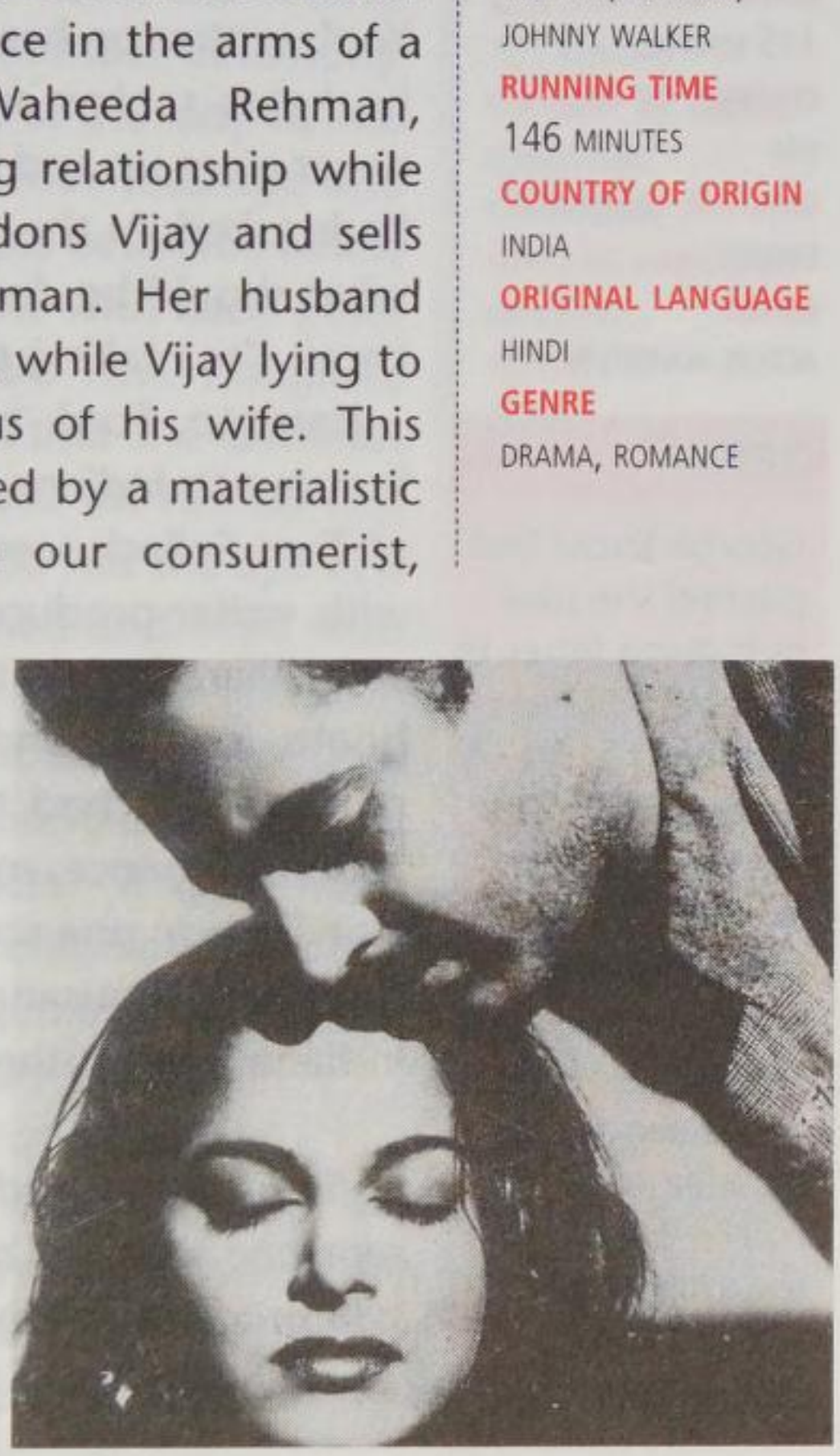
Best Screenplay at the **Golden Globes** (Quentin Tarantino) in 1995.

Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Samuel L Jackson) and Best Screenplay-Original (Quentin Tarantino, Roger Avary) at the **BAFTA Awards**.

# PYAASA (1957)

Guru Dutt's masterpiece is built on ironic shifts of plot and character. So the poet Vijay, played by Guru Dutt himself, is starving, unpublished and anonymous in life but becomes famous, best-selling and revered when people believe that he is dead. Vijay falls in love with a beautiful college-mate but eventually finds solace in the arms of a prostitute. Gulabo, played by Waheeda Rehman, understands the value of her fledgling relationship while Meena, played by Mala Sinha, abandons Vijay and sells herself into marriage with a richer man. Her husband accuses her of being a *baazaroo aurat,* while Vijay lying to a policeman, gives Gulabo the status of his wife. This haunting tragedy of an artist suffocated by a materialistic world seems especially relevant in our consumerist, celebrity-crazy culture. Vijay's lament – *Yeh duniya agar mil bhi jaaye toh kya hai* – has even more resonance today. Sahir Ludhianvi's poetry, the performances and S.D. Burman's music are just a few of the many reasons for the enduring appeal of *Pyaasa.* Incredibly the film also includes a song charged with eroticism and longing – the Baul *bhajan, Aaj sajan mohe ang laga lo.* Gulabo's face as she almost touches Vijay but then turns away, is unforgettable.

**DIRECTOR**
GURU DUTT
**STARRING**
MALA SINHA, GURU DUTT, WAHEEDA REHMAN, REHMAN, JOHNNY WALKER
**RUNNING TIME**
146 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
DRAMA, ROMANCE



*Guru Dutt hardly spoke on the sets but his films spoke volumes. The entire credit for my performance in* Pyaasa *goes to Dutt. After explaining the mood of the scene, he would give a free rein to his artiste.*

**– Actress Mala Sinha in the book *Indian Cinema: The Bollywood Saga***

## TRIVIA

Waheeda Rehman's role in *Pyaasa* was based on a real life character. Abrar Alvi and his friends met a girl named Gulabo in the red light district of Bombay. He used her exact words in the film.

# RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (1981)

**DIRECTOR**
STEVEN SPIELBERG
**STARRING**
HARRISON FORD, KAREN ALLEN, PAUL FREEMAN
**RUNNING TIME**
115 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
ACTION, ADVENTURE

## TRIVIA

George Lucas first pitched the idea of Indiana Jones to his friend Steven Spielberg in 1977, the weekend *Star Wars* opened in theaters. Lucas and Spielberg were in Hawaii on vacation when Lucas suggested his idea of a movie based on the cliffhanger serials of old Hollywood.

Indiana Jones, an adventurer-archaeologist armed with a whip and a hat, is one of my favourite movie characters. Here's a man so attractive that when he teaches archaeology class at the university, a besotted student in the first row, blinks at him slowly because she has 'Love You' written on her eyelids. Indy is a hero with soft spots – he hates snakes and gets bruised and battered. But he never gives up and he never runs out of cool lines. So when he is asked, in the middle of furious life-and-death action, what should be done next, Indy famously replies: "I don't know. I'm making this up as I go."

Harrison Ford brought an earthy sexiness and wry humour to Indiana Jones. Which is why the original choice of Tom Selleck seems unimaginable. And Spielberg along with writer-producer George Lucas created an adventure so exhilarating that three more movies, a television serial, books, comics and video games were spun off it. But nothing matched the genius of the first film, which had action, romance, mystery and just the right dose of creepy crawlies – in one scene, the floor appears to move because there are thousands of snakes slithering on it. For me, Indiana Jones is the original superhero.

*Indiana Jones redefined the classic American hero as someone who did not have a backbone made of steel and skin made of Teflon.*

**– Director Steven Spielberg to *Empire* magazine**

## AWARDS

Nominated for 8 **Academy Awards** in 1982, including Best Picture, Best Director (Steven Spielberg) and Best Music, Original Score (John Williams) and won four Best Art Direction, Best Film Editing, Best Sound and Best Visual Effects as well as winning a fifth Special Achievement Academy Award in Sound Effects Editing for Ben Burtt and Richard L Anderson.

Nominated for the **Golden Globe** for Best Director – Motion Picture (Steven Spielberg) in 1982

**BAFTA Award** for Best Production Design (Norman Reynolds) and was nominated in 6 other categories.

# RAISE THE RED LANTERN (1991)

China in the 1920s. A beautiful 19-year-old student drops out of university and becomes the concubine of a rich man. Songlian, played by Gong Li, becomes fourth mistress in a stately home rife with rituals, intrigue and repression. The master, whose face we never see clearly, bestows his favours upon his women with much ceremony. Red lanterns are lit outside the quarters of the lady he has chosen for the night. She also gets a foot massage and decides the menu for the next day. In this beautiful, airless prison, all the women can do is compete with each other and try their best to produce a male heir. Songlian, headstrong and rebellious, slowly learns that she can trust no one and the only escape is death. *Raise the Red Lantern* is lovely to look at. Director Zhang Yimou has the eye of a painter. Each frame is perfectly composed and filled with details and colour.

The swaying red lanterns and Li are strikingly beautiful. But the stunning visuals only heighten Songlian's tragedy. The beauty underscores the ugliness. Critics have described the film as an allegory for Communist China but with or without the subtext, this is genius filmmaking. Songlian will get under your skin and stay there.

**DIRECTOR**
ZHANG YIMOU

**STARRING**
GONG LI, HE CAIFEI, CAO CUIFEN, KONG LIN

**RUNNING TIME**
125 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
CHINA/HONG KONG/TAIWAN

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
MANDARIN

**GENRE**
DRAMA

*If in 20 years after I've made a lot more movies, they write one sentence about me in a textbook, I'd be satisfied if they said: "Zhang Yimou's style is strong visual presentation in a distinctly Chinese fashion."*

**– Director Zhang Yimou to *Time* magazine**

## AWARDS

Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film (Hong Kong) at the **Academy Awards** in 1992.

**BAFTA Award** for Best Film not in the English Language (Fu-Sheng Chiu and Zhang Yimou) in 1993.

## TRIVIA

The film has been interpreted as a thinly veiled criticism of Chinese authoritarianism and was banned in China.

# RASHOMON (1950)

**DIRECTOR**
AKIRA KUROSAWA
**STARRING**
TOSHIRO MIFUNE, MACHIKO KYO, MASAYUKI MORI
**RUNNING TIME**
88 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
JAPAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
JAPANESE
**GENRE**
DRAMA

Even if you've never seen Akira Kurosawa's classic *Rashomon*, it's likely that you've heard the title used to refer to a situation in which the truth remains unknowable. The film is simplicity itself: three men wait for a rain storm to pass. Two of them tell the third about an incident that they were involved in: in the forest, a woman was raped and her husband was killed. Later a bandit named Tajomaru was found with the dead man's horse.

It seems like a straight-forward crime but we hear four versions of it (including the dead man's via a medium). Each version widely differs from the other and eventually we have no idea which one is true. With stunning performances and ground-breaking cinematography (Kazuo Miyagawa), *Rashomon* is a horrifying vision of human deceit. It's hard to imagine but the head of the studio that funded it disliked the film so much that he had his name removed from the credits.

Eventually, of course, *Rashomon* went on to win top prize at the Venice Film Festival, the Oscar for best foreign language film and became one of the best-known Japanese films ever.

*Human beings are unable to be honest with themselves about themselves. They cannot talk about themselves without embellishing. This script portrays such human beings – the kind who cannot survive without lies to make them feel they are better people than they really are.*

**– Director Akira Kurosawa in the book, *Rashomon* by Donald Richie**

## TRIVIA

The film was shot at the Nara virgin forest in Japan which was infested with mountain leeches. They dropped out of the trees onto the film crew. Their solution was to put a tub of salt in the entry of the inn. Before they left for the location in the morning they would cover their necks, arms and socks with salt, because leeches avoid salt.

## AWARDS

The official foreign language category was not established until 1956. Won the **Honorary Academy Award** as the most outstanding foreign language film released in the USA in 1951 by the Board of Governors.

Nominated for Best Art Director at the **Academy Awards** in 1952.

Golden Lion and the Italian Film Critics Award at the **Venice Film Festival** in 1951.

# RULES OF THE GAME, THE (1939)

"The awful thing about life is this," says a character in *The Rules of the Game,* "everyone has their reasons." Here everyone seems to be led by love. So a great aviator is pursuing a beautiful woman, who is already married. But her husband is unfaithful. Meanwhile, the woman's close friend Octave, played by Renoir, is attempting to play cupid between her and the aviator.

All of them, including the husband's mistress and several friends, go to a gorgeous country house for a hunting weekend. Here, the complicated relationships of the upper-classes are duplicated among the staff, who are also grappling with infidelity, jealousy, anger. These two parallel sets of romantic intrigues make for a film that is at once, comical, farcical and inevitably, tragic.

Renoir said in an interview that his attempt in the film was 'to show a rich, complex society where – to use a historic phrase – we are dancing on a volcano'.

The film released in 1939, on the eve of World War II, is an insightful critique of French society, especially the *haute bourgeoisie.* At one point, a character says, "Love as it exists in society is merely the mingling of two whims and the contact of two skins." Parts of this film are superbly funny – the climactic house party is a delightful burlesque of men punching, chasing and even shooting at each other while guests entertain themselves – but the sub-text is sadness and loss. And at the film's centre is an unforgettable hunting sequence in which fifty-one shots appear in less than four minutes and twelve animals die.

François Truffaut called *The Rules of the Game* 'the film of films.' Each viewing offers something new.

**DIRECTOR**
JEAN RENOIR
**STARRING**
MARCEL DALIO, NORA GREGOR, PAULETTE DUBOST, ROLAND TOUTAIN AND JEAN RENOIR
**RUNNING TIME**
110 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
FRANCE
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
FRENCH
**GENRE**
SOCIAL SATIRE

**TRIVIA**

When it first released in 1939, *The Rules of the Game* was an absolute disaster. Audiences tore up seats and burned newspapers in protest as the film was bad for morale in the face of impending war; the distributor forced Renoir to cut 33 minutes and when World War II broke out, the film was banned. Finally in 1956, 200 cans of outtakes were discovered and the film was restored closely to its original form.

The Rules of the Game *taught me the rules of the game.*

**– Director Robert Altman on the Criterion Collection DVD of *Rules of The Game,* released in 2004**

# SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (1977)

**DIRECTOR**
JOHN BADHAM
**STARRING**
JOHN TRAVOLTA, KAREN LYNN GORNEY, DONNA PESCOW
**RUNNING TIME**
118 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
MUSICAL, DRAMA

*Saturday Night Fever* has one of my favourite movie opening sequences. 19-year-old Tony Manero, in red shoes and tight black pants, walks or rather bounces down the sidewalk while the Bee Gees anthem 'Staying Alive' plays. He pauses only to pick up two slices of pizza, which he wolfs down, chewing with his mouth open and to check out a shirt that he wants to wear to the disco on the coming weekend. John Travolta as Tony is lean, gorgeous and bumbling. His charming naiveté is underlined with a melancholy that only leaves him when he's burning up the dance floor. At one point in the film, a girl that Tony likes tells him, "You're a cliché. You're nowhere, going no place." He has a squabbling family, a dead-end job and a gang of low IQ friends whose machismo expresses itself in violence, boorish behaviour and assaulting women in the backseat of a car. For Tony, the only escape is the dance floor on which he is the undisputed king. For people of a certain age, *Saturday Night Fever* offers nostalgic pleasure – the polyester bellbottoms, strobe lights and choreographed dancing to the infectious but supremely vacuous music of the Bee Gees (it is one of the biggest selling soundtracks of all time). Honestly, what were we thinking? But beyond this is a story filled with ache and longing. Travolta brings a real sweetness and vulnerability to the role. And a shot of the sun rising behind the Manhattan skyline with the twin towers still standing, makes you aware of how different the world once was.

**TRIVIA**

The white polyester suit worn by John Travolta sold at an auction for $145,000 was purchased by movie critic Gene Siskel who lists it as one of his favourite films.

*I knew from the first day that we had a major undiscovered movie star in John Travolta.*

**– Director John Badham on the television series The Directors for the Encore Movie Channel**

## AWARDS

In 1978, Nominated for an **Academy Award** for Best Actor in a Leading Role (John Travolta).

The film's soundtrack won a **Grammy** for Best Album of the Year by The Bees Gees.

# SEVENTH SEAL, THE (1957)

'If everything is imperfect in this world, love is perfect in its imperfection.' This wasn't a line that I expected to hear in *The Seventh Seal,* Bergman's iconic meditation on the absence of God, the nature of love and of course, death. Credited with launching art-house cinema, *The Seventh Seal* comes with a formidable reputation of being sombre, deeply philosophical and not very much fun. Actually it's humorous and wise, hopeful and sad.

The film is set in medieval Sweden. After a decade of war, a knight and his squire return home to find a country ripped apart by plague. Death is, literally, their companion. He comes to take the knight but agrees to delay as long as the knight can hold him off in a game of chess. *The Seventh Seal* grew out of a morality play that Bergman had written. The images – the knight and Death playing chess, the climactic Dance of Death – became so famous that they were endlessly reproduced and parodied in cinema. The film also launched the career of Max von Sydow who plays the tormented, angst-ridden knight. A footnote: Bergman first contacted Sydow for another role in the film, that of a lovable clown. *The Seventh Seal* is unimaginable without Sydow's gaunt, haunted face.

**DIRECTOR**
INGMAR BERGMAN
**STARRING**
MAX VON SYDOW, GUNNAR BJORNSTRAND, BENGT EKEROT
**RUNNING TIME**
96 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
SWEDEN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
SWEDISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA, FANTASY

*Who would have thought that the subject matter could yield such a pleasurable experience? If I described the story and tried to persuade a friend to watch it with me, how far would I get? 'Well,' I'd say, 'it takes place in a plague-ridden medieval Sweden and explores the limits of faith and reason based on Danish – and some German – philosophical concepts.' Now this is hardly anyone's idea of a good time, and yet it's all dealt off with such stupendous imagination, suspense, and flair that one sits riveted like a child at a harrowing fairy tale.*

**– Filmmaker Woody Allen to *The New York Times***

## AWARDS

Jury Special Prize at the **Cannes Film Festival** In 1957. It tied with *Kanal* (1957). Also nominated for the **Palme d'Or.**

## TRIVIA

The screenplay is based on a one-act play that Bergman had written earlier called *Trämålning* (Wood Painting).

# SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE (1998)

**DIRECTOR**
JOHN MADDEN
**STARRING**
JOSEPH FIENNES, GWYNETH PALTROW, JUDI DENCH
**RUNNING TIME**
123 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY, ROMANCE

*Shakespeare in Love* is a delightful, witty and wonderfully sexy account of exactly that – the great man in the throes of an epic passion. The year is 1593. Shakespeare is a rising playwright, currently fighting writer's block, struggling to start a play called Romeo and Ethel, The Pirate's Daughter. "It is," he mournfully tells his therapist, "as if my quill is broken." Enter the beautiful, spirited noblewoman Viola De Lesseps, who becomes his muse and inspires one of the greatest love stories in history: Romeo and Juliet.

Is any of this true? Of course not but writers Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard create a story that soars and charms with its wonderfully etched characters and dialogue. So Shakespeare exclaims about his rival Christopher Marlowe – 'Lovely waistcoat. Shame about the poetry.' And it is made amply clear that even 400-odd years ago, showbiz was pretty much the same – the harried producer insists on comedy and when someone asks him who Shakespeare is, he replies: 'Nobody – that's the author.' *Shakespeare in Love* won seven Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Actress in a Supporting Role for Judi Dench who was onscreen for a mere eight minutes. This is cinema that sparkles.

*This film is entertainment, which doesn't require it to be justified in the light of historical theory.*

**– Co-writer Tom Stoppard in *The New York Times***

## AWARDS

Nominated for 13 **Academy Awards** in 1999 and winner of 7 awards including Best Picture, Best Screenplay, Best Music, Best Costume Design, Best Art Direction, Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Judi Dench) and Best Actress in a Leading Role (Gwyneth Paltrow).

Nominated for 15 **BAFTA Awards** and winner of 3 awards including Best Film, Best Editing and Best Performance by an Actor in Supporting Role (Judi Dench).

Silver Bear at the **Berlin International Film Festival** for Outstanding Single Achievement for Screenwriting (Marc Norman, Tom Stoppard) and was nominated for Golden Berlin Bear (John Madden).

3 **Golden Globes** for Best Motion Picture – Comedy/Musical, Best Actress (Gwyneth Paltrow) and Best Screenplay and was also nominated for another 3 categories.

## TRIVIA

The original script, by Mark Norman, languished in the proposal stage at Universal, where Julia Roberts was attached to star. Gambling $4.5 mn, Miramax Films bought *Shakespeare In Love* as a vehicle for Paltrow and for director John Madden.

# SHINING, THE (1980)

**DIRECTOR**
STANLEY KUBRICK
**STARRING**
JACK NICHOLSON, SHELLEY DUVALL
**RUNNING TIME**
146 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
UNITED KINGDOM/USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
HORROR

"A story of the supernatural cannot be taken apart and analysed too closely," Stanley Kubrick said in an interview. "The ultimate test of its rationale is whether it is good enough to raise the hairs on the back of your neck." *The Shining,* based on a novel by Stephen King, will do more than that. It will unsettle you deeply. Kubrick's images – a tidal wave of blood emerging from closed lift doors, two little dead girls imploring a boy to play and of course Jack Nicholson's unhinged face in the doorway – will haunt you. *The Shining* is one of the scariest movies ever made. A family moves into an isolated hotel that has shut down for winter. Jack, who will function as the hotel's caretaker, hopes to use the silence to work on a writing project. His young son, who is psychic, knows that there is something deeply wrong with the hotel. The mother tries her best to keep her family together but slowly madness takes over. There are no clichéd creaking doors here or cheap jabs at making you jump. Instead Kubrick uses sound design and a Steadicam to create a nightmare so visceral that even the opening shots of Jack driving up the mountain road to the job interview, seem ominous. Watch it and be afraid.

*Stanley Kubrick made a majestically terrifying movie, where what you* don't *see or comprehend, shadows every move the characters make.*

**– Martin Scorsese in *The Daily Beast***

**TRIVIA**

The title comes from the line "We all shine on" in the John Lennon song 'Instant Karma'. Throughout King's works, "the Shine" or "the Shining" is used to refer to various telepathic abilities.

# SHOLAY (1975)

Shekhar Kapur once said that Indian film history could "be divided into *Sholay* BC and *Sholay* AD." *Sholay* transcends the labels that usually define films – blockbuster, classic and cult. It is, as director Dharmesh Darshan put it, 'part of our heritage as Indians'.

For me, *Sholay* is a nearly flawless rendition of the Hindi film form. Writers Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar referenced Hollywood Westerns but created a quintessentially Indian masala mix that seamlessly blends romance, drama, comedy and action. The characters – Veeru, Jai, Thakur, Gabbar Singh – are the stuff of folklore and the dialogue has passed into colloquial language. Even a line, taken out of context, conveys a world of meaning – *'Jo dar gaya, samjho mar gaya,' 'Loha garam hai, maar do hathoda,'* and my favourite, *'Kitney aadmi the?' Sholay* remains Hindi cinema's gold standard.

**DIRECTOR**
RAMESH SIPPY

**STARRING**
DHARMENDRA, AMITABH BACHCHAN, SANJEEV KUMAR, HEMA MALINI, JAYA BHADURI

**RUNNING TIME**
188 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI

**GENRE**
ACTION, ADVENTURE

*Sholay showed us what movie making was all about... what action could do to a film.*

**– Filmmaker Manmohan Desai in the book *So Many Cinemas: The Motion Picture in India***

## AWARDS

**Filmfare Award** for Best Editing (MS Shinde) in 1976 and a **Special Filmfare Award** for Best Film in the last 50 years of Indian cinema (Ramesh Sippy) in 2005.

## TRIVIA

Britannia ran a highly successful advertising campaign of Gabbar Singh selling Glucose D biscuits to kids as *Gabbar ki asli pasand* (Gabbar's real choice) with Amjad Khan, Macmohan and Viju Khote. This was the first instance of a Bollywood film villain endorsing a product.

# SIDEWAYS (2004)

**DIRECTOR**
ALEXANDER PAYNE
**STARRING**
PAUL GIAMATTI, THOMAS HADEN CHURCH, VIRGINIA MADSEN
**RUNNING TIME**
126 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY, DRAMA

## TRIVIA

Following the film's US release in October 2004, Merlot sales dropped 2 per cent while Pinot noir sales increased 16 per cent in the Western United States. A similar trend occurred in British wine outlets.

*Sideways* is about a man steeped in failure. Miles is an 8th grade English teacher who drinks too much, can't get his novel published and can't get over his ex-wife who is happily remarried. He is prickly, depressed and a wine lover (who can be an insufferable snob – he threatens to leave a dinner if anyone orders Merlot). In short, Miles is the kind of character that you would studiously avoid if you met him at a party. But director Alexander Payne and actor Paul Giamatti construct him with such skill and affection that you deeply care about his problems and predicament.

*Sideways* is about a week-long road trip that Miles takes with his best friend Jack through California wine country just before Jack gets married. There is plenty of drinking and sex – Jack wants to bed every woman he sees – but think of this film as the opposite of *The Hangover,* the blockbuster comedy about a debauched bachelor party.

*Sideways* is deeply felt, true and achingly human. At the centre of *Sideways* is an exquisite love scene in which Miles talks about the Pinot Noir grape, describing it as thin-skinned, difficult to cultivate and yet, if nurtured, capable of greatness. He is of course, unknowingly, talking about himself. It's heartbreaking to watch. Films today are so much about furious special effects and big-budget scale that we can sometimes lose sight of what makes them magical in the first place – character and story-telling. *Sideways* is a reminder of that.

*It was taking me a while to get to my first feature and I found myself diving into cooking a lot, and the more I cooked, the more I needed to know about wine.*
**– Director Alexander Payne to *The Guardian***

## AWARDS

Nominated for 5 **Academy Awards** and won Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay (Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor) in 2005.

The **Golden Globe** for Best Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical and Best Screenplay and was nominated in 5 other categories in 2005.

Best Screenplay – Adapted at the **BAFTA Awards** in 2005.

# SPIRITED AWAY (2001)

First, erase the notion that animated films are only for children. Miyazaki is, according to Pixar's John Lasseter, 'the world's greatest living animator' and *Spirited Away* is one of his finest films. It broke box office records in japan and won an Oscar for best animated feature in 2003. But Miyazaki, a master of hand-drawn animation, isn't the Japanese version of Disney. *Spirited Away* about a sullen 10-year-old girl Chihiro, who finds herself trapped in a bathhouse for spirits, is far removed from Hollywood's sanitized animation. The creatures here are unique, bewildering and therefore, mesmerizing. These include Yubaba, a powerful witch with a gigantic nose who runs the bathhouse and loves only her infant son – who for reasons unexplained is also gigantic. There's also No Face, a spirit who can create gold and swallow people whole. Not to mention, Yubaba's bodyguards – three bouncing heads without bodies. Miyazaki's universe eschews simplistic black and white. Characters shift and change and even those that seem scary have a softer side. *Spirited Away* is also stunningly beautiful. Every frame brims with colour and detail. This is a world so rich with wonder and imagination that it makes reality anaemic. It is one joyride that shouldn't be missed.

*It's not me who makes the film, the film makes itself and I have no choice but to follow.*

**– Miyazaki in the book *The Anime Art of Hayao Miyazaki***

**DIRECTOR**
HAYAO MIYAZAKI
**VOICED BY**
DAVEIGH CHASE, SUZANNE PLESHETTE, JASON MARSDEN
**RUNNING TIME**
125 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
JAPAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
JAPANESE
**GENRE**
ANIMATION, FANTASY

## TRIVIA

Miyazaki's inspiration for the character of the girl Chihiro was based on the director's close observation of one of his best friends' 10-year-old daughter in the course of one of his customary summer retreats to a mountain cabin in Shinshu. Looking at the girl, the director wondered if her high-spirited nature would endure when she grew up and decided to make a film about a 10-year old girl – something he had never attempted before.

## AWARDS

Golden Bear (tied with *Bloody Sunday*) at the **Berlin International Film Festival** in 2002.

**Academy Award** in 2003 for Best Animated Feature in the first year that category was televised.

Nominated for a **BAFTA Award** for Best Film not in the English Language (Toshio Suzuki, Hayao Miyazaki) in 2004.

# STAR WARS (1977)

**DIRECTOR**
GEORGE LUCAS
**STARRING**
MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER
**RUNNING TIME**
121 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
ADVENTURE, FANTASY

I still remember clearly the shock and awe of seeing *Star Wars* for the first time in a theater. As the letters, 'A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...' crawled up the screen, I was transfixed. I had never seen anything like it. Neither had the rest of the world. *Star Wars* was at once, futuristic and ancient, cartoonish and mythical, fantastical and utterly believable. Lucas refashioned standard storytelling tropes – an epic journey, the naïve but brave rookie (Luke Skywalker), the charming rogue (Han Solo), the feisty girl they're both interested in (Princess Leia), the unfathomably evil villain (Darth Vader) – into a truly original, path-breaking film.

*Star Wars* set the template for the big budget, special effects blockbusters that Hollywood is making to date. It brought in movie merchandising (Lucas kept the merchandising rights, which is what made him a billionaire). *Stars Wars* became the top grossing film ever when it first released and the revenues helped create multiplexes. The hardware in the film might seem dated now but the story hasn't aged a bit. It's still thrilling to hear Han Solo (quoting the wise Obi-Wan Kenobi) say: May the Force be with you. This is, every inch, a classic.

Star Wars *changed my life more than any so-called art film. There's no greater art than* Star Wars *to my mind."*

**– Will Smith on *The Front Row with Anupama Chopra***

## AWARDS

7 **Academy Awards** out of 10 nominations in 1978.

Best Visual Effects, Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design, Best Original Score, Best Sound, Film Editing and a Special Achievement Award for Ben Burtt for sound effects.

The **Golden Globe** for Best Original Score (John Williams).

3 **Grammys** for John Williams for the film's score in 1978.

Best Sound and Best Music (John Williams) at the **BAFTA Awards** in 1979.

## TRIVIA

May 4 is considered a holiday by *Star Wars* fans to celebrate *Star Wars* culture and honour the films. It is called Star Wars Day because of the popularity of a common pun spoken on this day. Since the phrase 'May the Force be with you' is a famous quote often spoken in the *Star Wars* films, fans commonly say 'May the fourth be with you' on this day.

# SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS (1941)

**DIRECTOR**
PRESTON STURGES
**STARRING**
JOEL MCCREA, VERONICA LAKE
**RUNNING TIME**
90 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY

*Sullivan's Travels* is about a director who wants to make an 'important' film. John Sullivan, played by Joel McCrea, is rich and successful but his films are lightweight comedies with names like *Hey Hey in the Hayloft* and *Ants in Your Pants of 1939*. Sullivan longs to make 'a picture with dignity,' that is 'a mirror to the time'. When his studio bosses point out that he knows little about the downtrodden and what it's like to be poor, Sullivan dresses up as a hobo and embarks on a journey to experience 'trouble.'

*Sullivan's Travels* is dedicated to the 'memory of those who made us laugh...whose efforts have lightened our burden a little.' Sullivan's journey has moments that are laugh-out-loud funny but at the core, there is a real generosity and insight. Sturges, who also wrote the film, doesn't hold back on emotion or tenderness. By the end, like Sullivan, we also understand the value of comedy. The director says, "There is a lot to be said for making people laugh. Did you know that's all some people have? It isn't much but it's better than nothing in this cockeyed caravan." I couldn't agree more.

*The film is the result of an urge to tell some of my fellow filmwrights that they were getting a little too deep-dish and to leave the preaching to the preachers.*

**– Preston Sturges in *The New York Times***

**TRIVIA**

The title of the Coen brothers' 2000 film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* is taken from a book featured in *Sullivan's Travels* that Sullivan wants to adapt into a film.

# TAMPOPO (1985)

"How are my noodles?" asks a character in *Tampopo*. "They have sincerity but they lack guts," someone replies. *Tampopo*, which means Dandelion in Japanese, is a film that celebrates food, sex, films – in short, everything that pleasures the senses. So at one point, an old man teaches a young novice to eat noodles – the elaborate instruction includes caressing the noodles with chopsticks to express affection. We also have a stylish gangster and his moll ravishing room service. Their many creative uses of food include passing an egg yolk from one mouth to the other without breaking it.

*Tampopo* has been called a 'Ramen Western.' The main narrative is about a gritty truck driver and his sidekick, teaching a young widow the art of making noodles so that she can run her restaurant successfully. But the film beautifully segues into mini-narratives that have no direct link to the story. There is a young executive who upstages his bosses with his knowledge of French cuisine and a dying mother who rises to cook one last meal. Itami, who also wrote the film, injects humour into every situation so that you laugh harder as you get hungrier watching people devour food through the film. The various animal parts might make vegetarians squeamish. Other than that, *Tampopo* is a uniquely delicious movie.

**DIRECTOR**
JÛZÔ ITAMI
**STARRING**
KEN WATANABE, NOBUKO MIYAMOTO, KOJI YAKUSHO
**RUNNING TIME**
114 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
JAPAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
JAPANESE
**GENRE**
COMEDY

*When Japanese talk about noodles they get very passionate. I don't know why, they just do. And I think the popularity of noodles is one reason this film was popular. You might think rice is the most popular food in Japan, but I can't see making a movie about rice.*

**– Director Jûzô Itami to *The New York Times***

## TRIVIA

Director Itami was famous for his satirical films on Japanese culture. In 1992 his film *Minbo* or 'The Gentle Art of Japanese Extortion', angered the Japanese mobsters so much that they assaulted him in public and viciously slashed his face, permanently scarring him.

# TAXI DRIVER (1976)

**DIRECTOR**
MARTIN SCORSESE
**STARRING**
ROBERT DE NIRO, JODIE FOSTER, HARVEY KEITEL
**RUNNING TIME**
113 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
CRIME, DRAMA

*Taxi Driver* is a deeply disturbing portrait of loneliness. Travis Bickle, an insomniac, ex-Marine drives a cab in New York, a city he calls 'an open sewer'. He is a ticking time-bomb. Bickle finds it impossible to make any human connections and eventually his rage and frustration pours out in an orgy of violence that has the impact of a body blow. More than thirty-five years after release, *Taxi Driver* still has the power to haunt you.

The film's writer Paul Schrader, said in an interview that the film holds up because 'it is the real deal'. "Scorsese, Bob (De Niro) and I were in that place at that time." Incredibly De Niro manages to be unhinged, desperately sad and charming at the same time. He makes us understand the tragedy of Travis Bickle. My favourite *Taxi Driver* story is Scorsese's anecdote about how De Niro actually drove a cab in New York for several nights. One day, an actor got in and recognized him. He said: "Jesus, last year you won the Oscar and now you're driving a cab again." De Niro said he was only doing research. To which the actor replied, "Yeah, Bobby, I know. I been there, too."

*I was very enamoured of guns, I was very suicidal, I was drinking heavily, I was obsessed with pornography in the way a lonely person is, and all those elements are upfront in the script.*

**– Writer Paul Schrader to *Total Film* magazine**

## AWARDS

**Palme D'Or** in 1976 at the **Cannes Film Festival**.

Nominated for 4 **Academy Awards** including Best Actor (Robert De Niro) and Best Supporting Actress (Jodie Foster), Best Score and Best Picture.

**BAFTA Award** for Best Supporting Actress (Jodie Foster) and Most Promising Newcomer for this movie and also for *Bugsy Malone* (1976).

## TRIVIA

In his book *Schrader on Schrader,* Paul Schrader reveals that the film's most quoted line, "You talkin' to me?" was improvised by Robert De Niro and inspired by a New York comedian who used the phrase in his act.

# TEESRI MANZIL (1966)

**DIRECTOR**
VIJAY ANAND

**STARRING**
SHAMMI KAPOOR, ASHA PAREKH, HELEN

**RUNNING TIME**
172 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI

**GENRE**
MYSTERY

*Teesri Manzil* is one of Hindi cinema's most crackling thrillers. Even before the titles are over, a girl is dead – fallen or pushed from the third floor – and potential murderers and motives have been introduced. But before we find out 'whodunit', we get romance, comedy and some of the most sparkling set-piece song sequences ever put on film. Has anything ever matched up to Helen gyrating in the iris of a giant eye in *O haseena zulfonwali* or the synchronized shaking of bee-hive hair-dos in *Aaja aaja?*

The story by Nasir Hussain takes some convoluted detours – do ignore the business about the heroine, Sunita played by Asha Parekh, trying to avenge her sister's death by luring the main suspect, a drummer named Rocky, into the mountains and then having a girl's hockey team beat him. But even when the plot becomes silly, R.D. Burman's superb soundtrack smoothens the ride. And then there's the irresistible Shammi Kapoor, in all his hip-swivelling, Elvis Presley-glory. Few thrillers are this much fun – on the sidelines, you might also notice the handsome, young Salim Khan who gave acting a shot before picking up the pen.

*When we were shooting* O haseena zulfon wali, *I got the news that my wife was ill. I stopped shooting and went home. She couldn't recover and Nasir stood by me. It took me a long time to recover from her death and I was in no condition to shoot. It was tough but Nasir and Goldie gave me strength.* Teesri Manzil *will always be special because Geeta was very happy that Nasir and I were back together. This one is truly for her.*

**– Shammi Kapoor in *Indian Express***

**TRIVIA**

*Teesri Manzil* was supposed to be a Dev Anand – S.D. Burman film. But S.D. Burman was ill and he wanted to give his son a break. Dev Anand dropped out because he was making *Guide*.

# THIS IS SPINAL TAP (1984)

Nigel Tufnel, a sincere but pea-brained rock musician, is giving an interview to a documentary filmmaker as he plays a slow, sad piece of music. Tufnel says: "I'm really influenced by Mozart and Bach and this is in between, like a Mach piece, really." "It's pretty," says the filmmaker, "What do you call it?" Tufnel says: "Well, this piece is called Lick My Love Pump."

*This Is Spinal Tap,* a fake documentary about an awful rock band on tour in America, is so funny that it hurts. Reiner, who plays the filmmaker, and his actors improvised the script, which gives it a quasi-realistic, lived-in feel. Spinal Tap is on a downward spiral but armed with their terrible songs, spandex and a gigantic devil's head stage prop, they just keep going and going – when their manager is asked if the smaller venues suggest that their popularity is waning, he replies: "No, their appeal is becoming more selective." But Reiner's satire never becomes cutting or mean. There is great affection for these goofballs. *This Is Spinal Tap* was so successful that it actually spawned a rock band and record albums. One request: make sure to watch the film until the credits have rolled. The last few lines, which have Tufnel considering an alternative career in haberdashery, are instant classics.

**DIRECTOR**
ROB REINER
**STARRING**
ROB REINER, MICHAEL MCKEAN, CHRISTOPHER GUEST
**RUNNING TIME**
82 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY, MUSIC

*My first day on* Spinal Tap *as a director I was a nervous wreck because not only had I never done this before but we didn't have a script. There was no script ever. We had a basic story outline about eight pages long of what the film was going to be but we never really worked out the scenes and what was going to happen in the scenes. So it was little bit intimidating and overwhelming.*

**– Rob Reiner on the television series *The Directors* for the Encore Movie Channel**

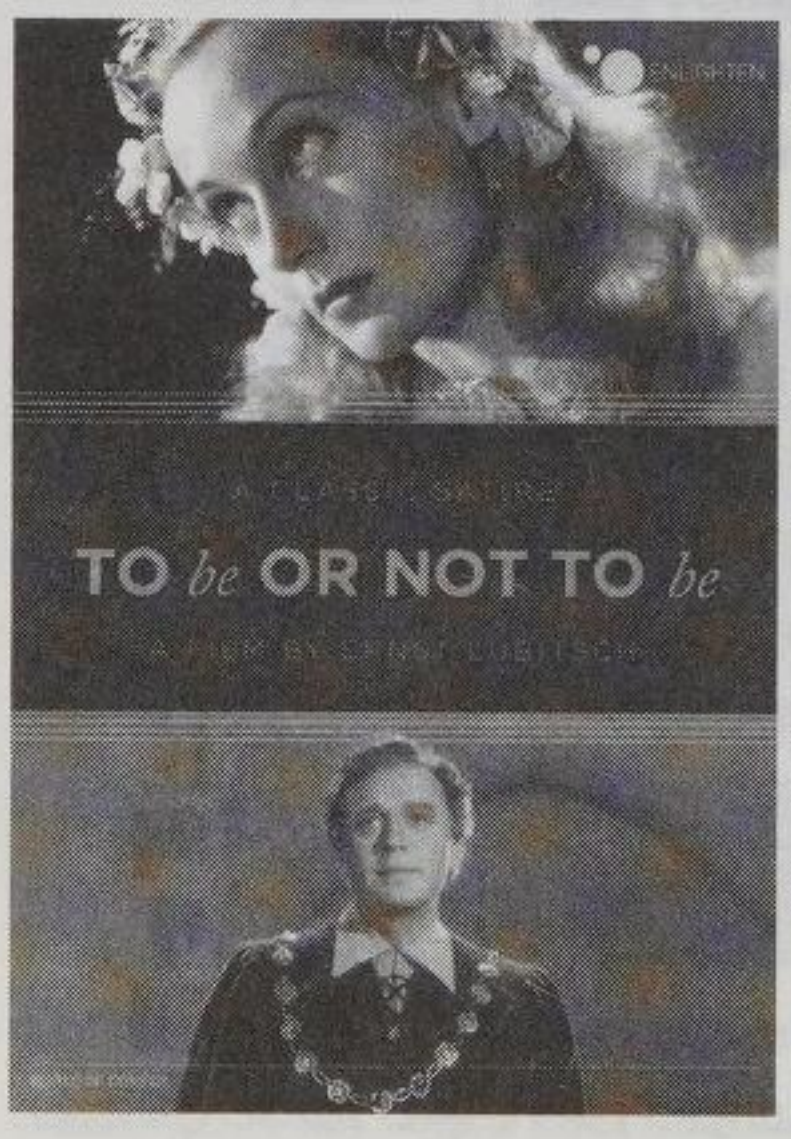
**TRIVIA**

According to Rob Reiner, his character's name, Marty DiBergi is an homage to Martin Scorsese (Marty), Brian De Palma (Di), Steven Spielberg (Berg), Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni.

# TO BE OR NOT TO BE (1942)

**DIRECTOR**
ERNST LUBITSCH
**STARRING**
CAROLE LOMBARD, JACK BENNY
**RUNNING TIME**
99 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY

*To Be or Not to Be* has the most unlikely setting for a comedy – Nazi-occupied Warsaw. It is a time of bombs, spies and oppression. From this material, director Ernst Lubitsch, who was Jewish himself, creates a brilliant satire that is insightful, poignant and laugh-out-loud funny. A troupe of theatre actors in Warsaw use their talent for acting and disguises to get the better of the Nazis. They are led by Joseph Tura, played by Benny, a glorious ham of a leading man whose big-ticket role is Hamlet – hence the film's title. The famous Shakespearean line is also a cue used by Tura's wife's admirer to leave the theatre and go to see her, which creates much hilarity. Tura is so vain that even when he's disguised and in the thick of a dangerous intrigue, he asks Nazi officers if they've heard of the famous Polish actor Joseph Tura. One has. He says, "What he did to Shakespeare we are doing now to Poland." The film generated controversy when it was released but the ensuing years established it as a comic classic. To watch it is to understand why the great director Billy Wilder put the following question in eight-inch-high letters on his office wall: How would Lubitsch do it?




*What I have satirized in this picture are the Nazis and their ridiculous ideology. I have also satirized the attitude of actors who always remain actors regardless how dangerous the situation might be, which I believe is a true observation.*

**– Director Ernst Lubitsch in a 1943 letter to *Philadelphia Enquirer***

## AWARDS

Nominated for an **Academy Award** for Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture (Werner Heymann) in 1943.

## TRIVIA

The film was released after the death of star Carole Lombard who was killed in a plane crash after returning from a tour selling war bonds.

# TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (1962)

2012 marked the 50th anniversary of the screen adaptation of Harper Lee's beloved novel about a lawyer in a small town in Alabama, who defends a black man against patently false rape charges. Atticus Finch, the upstanding, inherently decent lawyer played by Gregory Peck, is one of the great heroes of American film – in fact the character was voted as the top screen Hollywood hero of the last 100 years by the American Film Institute and the film ranked second in the Institute's poll of the 100 Most Inspiring Movies of All Time.

**DIRECTOR**
ROBERT MULLIGAN
**STARRING**
GREGORY PECK, MARY BADHAM, PHILLIP ALFORD
**RUNNING TIME**
129 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA

Critics, including Roger Ebert and Andrew Sarris, have commented on the film's naïve racial politics and portrayal of African-Americans. But despite this, *To Kill a Mockingbird* carries great emotional heft. The story of Atticus Finch, told through the eyes of his six-year-old daughter Scout, hits you hard – especially the iconic scene, in which Finch walks through the courtroom after having lost the case and the Reverend asks Scout to rise. He says: "Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'." On his copy of the film's script, Peck had made the following notes: Fairness. Stubbornness. Courage. Love. Atticus Finch still represents the best in us.

*The role of Atticus Finch gave Gregory Peck the chance to play himself.*
**– Harper Lee as reported in *Los Angeles Times***

## AWARDS

3 **Academy Awards** for Best Actor in a leading Role (Gregory Peck), Best Art Direction and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from another medium (Horton Foote) and was nominated in another 5 categories including Best Picture.

Gary Cooper Award (Robert Mulligan) at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1963. Nominated for the **Palme d'Or.**

Best Film Promoting International Understanding, Best Motion Picture Actor – Drama (Gregory Peck), Best Motion Picture Score (Elmer Bernstein) at the **Golden Globes**.

## TRIVIA

The character of Dill is based on Harper Lee's childhood friend and neighbour, author Truman Capote.

# TOKYO STORY (1953)

**DIRECTOR**
YASUJIRO OZU
**STARRING**
CHISHU RYU, CHIEKO HIGASHIYAMA, HARUKO SUGIMURA
**RUNNING TIME**
136 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
JAPAN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
JAPANESE
**GENRE**
DRAMA

Nothing much happens in *Tokyo Story.* An elderly couple travels to Tokyo to meet their children. The children are polite but pre-occupied with their own families and professions. The couple returns home. Soon after, the mother dies. The children visit, weep and leave. The father faces life alone.

This simple story is told with infinite grace and compassion. Ozu's barely moving camera captures the harshness and beauty of ordinary lives. He doesn't judge his characters but records their wounds and disappointments. So the parents hesitantly agree that their children are 'better than average'. In a quietly devastating sequence, the children, who don't have the time to take their parents anywhere, pool in their money and send them to a spa. It's beautiful but also crowded and noisy. They can barely sleep. The next morning, the father only says: "Let's go home." In his landmark 1972 book, *Transcendental Style in Film,* American director Paul Schrader put Ozu alongside Carl Theodor Dreyer and Robert Bresson as a master of 'spiritual filmmaking'. *Tokyo Story* finds the spiritual in the mundane, which is why it feels eternal.

*This is one of my most melodramatic pictures.*

**– Yasujiro Ozu as quoted in the book *Ozu's Tokyo Story***

**TRIVIA**

American expert on Ozu, Donald Richie, remembers taking the Indian director Satyajit Ray to see *Tokyo Story* and observed how the great director was heaving with emotion at the end.

# UNDERGROUND (1995)

There is no war until a brother kills a brother. This devastating insight comes to us at the end of a sprawling, ambitious, manic movie that works as fable, farce, anti-war satire and wrenching tragedy leavened by moments of laugh-out-loud black humour.

*Underground* spans from 1941 – when both Germans and the Allies bombed Yugoslavia – to 1992 when the country is breaking apart. Two friends join the resistance against the Nazis in Belgrade. Marko, a resourceful schemer played by Manojlovic, convinces Blacky, a rough electrician played by Ristovski, that the war continues and that he must stay in an underground cellar below Marko's house and make firearms. Marko dupes entire families for decades. When they finally emerge, Marko's brother asks someone the way to Yugoslavia and is told that there is no Yugoslavia anymore.

But this summary barely skims the surface of Kusturica's incredible movie. There are images here that are indelible, including those of animals roaming freely after bombs destroy the zoo. So a swan picks at a tiger's face. For a brief moment, they seem friends and then he decides to make a meal of the bird.

*Underground* has a delirious feel to it. There is a raucous, feverish energy here. The film is a poignant parable for all people and all nations. Which is why the end title reads: 'This story has no end.' History is proof that it doesn't.

**DIRECTOR**
EMIR KUSTURICA

**STARRING**
MIKI MANOJLOVIC, LAZAR RISTOVSKI, MIRJANA JOKOVIC

**RUNNING TIME**
167 MINUTES

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, BULGARIA, HUNGARY

**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
SERBIAN, ENGLISH, GERMAN

**GENRE**
POLITICAL DRAMA

*I was born in a country where hope, laughter and the joy of living are stronger than anywhere else. Evil as well. You are perpetrator or the victim.*

**– Director Emir Kusturica to *Los Angeles Times***

## AWARDS

**Palme d'Or** in 1995 at the **Cannes Film Festival**.

## TRIVIA

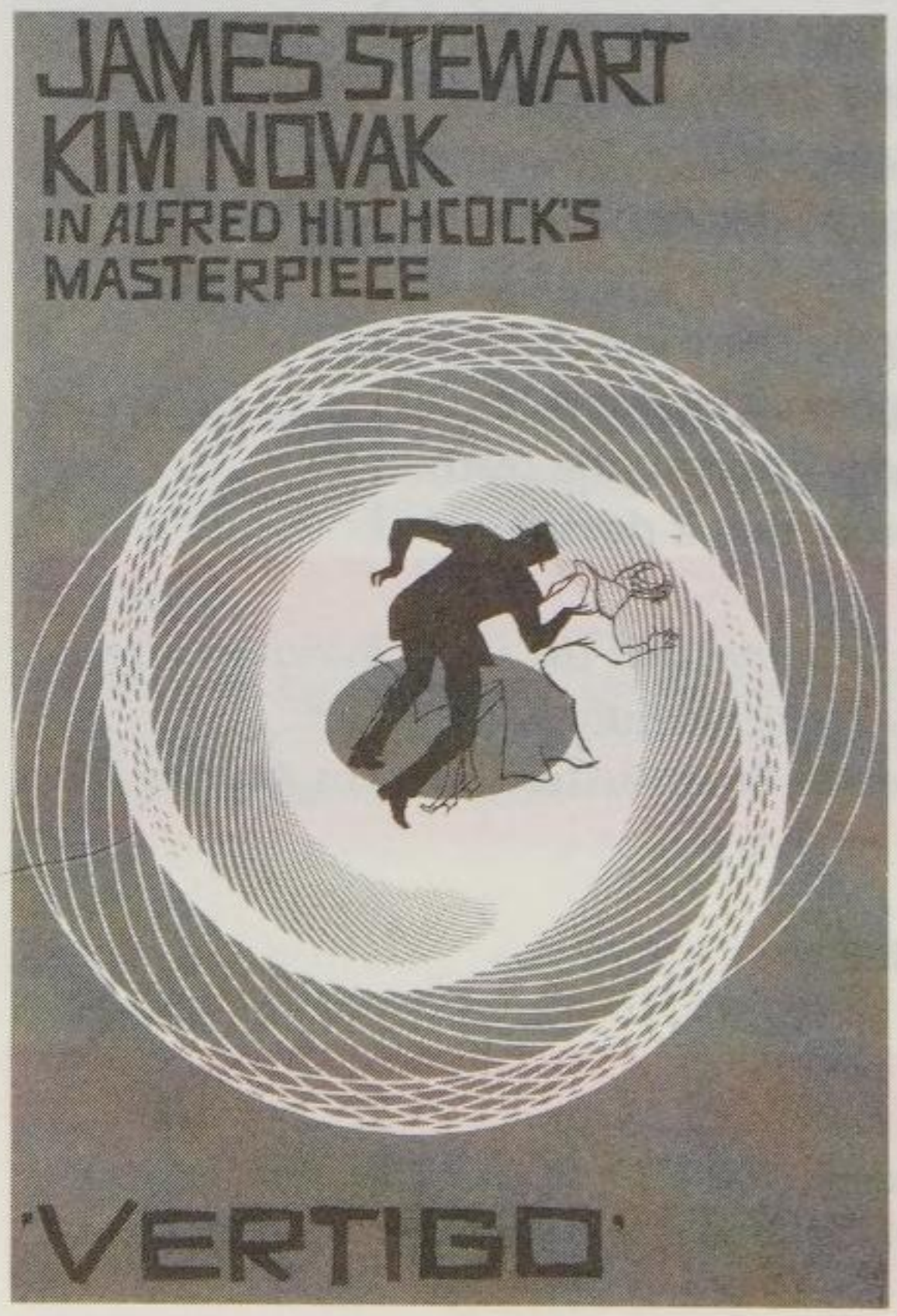
Director Emir Kusturica's second Palme d'Or after *When Father Was Away on Business*, made him one of only seven filmmakers to receive two Golden Palms.

# VERTIGO (1958)

**DIRECTOR**
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
**STARRING**
JAMES STEWART, KIM NOVAK, BARBARA BEL GEDDES
**RUNNING TIME**
128 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
USA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
THRILLER, MYSTERY

*Vertigo,* considered by many critics to be among Hitchcock's finest film, is a many-splendoured thing. You can view it as a straight thriller in which an ex-detective becomes embroiled with a woman he is hired to watch or as a psychological portrait of a man's obsession with an icy blonde woman who remains forever out of reach or as, some film scholars have suggested, a portrait of Hitchcock himself who was a legendary control freak, especially with regard to his actresses, many of whom were blonde. All of which only suggests that one viewing is not enough.

Detective Scottie Ferguson, played by James Stewart, has a fear of heights, which forces him to quit the force. A friend hires him to tail his beautiful wife, Madeline played by Kim Novak, who seems to be suffering from delusions and is suicidal. Scottie falls in love with her but he cannot follow her when she runs up the bell tower of a church and flings herself off. Hitchcock's masterful telling of this twisted story (based on the French novel, *D'entre les morts*), was greatly enhanced by Bernard Herrmann's soundtrack, which Martin Scorsese named as his favourite film soundtrack ever. The film is subsumed with an undefined sadness and tragedy. See it again and then again.




*The film exists somewhere outside of time, in your unconscious. It's a dark film, a deep, dark nightmare. The techniques involved are unbelievable – the music, the editing, the colour, the slow, deliberate, dreamlike pace. I'm not sure if audiences in 1958 – me included, because I saw it at the tender age of ten – knew what was going on. Everybody who's ever*

*tried to do anything suspenseful has copied Hitchcock. As a matter of fact, everyone who's ever put two pieces of film together has copied Hitchcock. That's how it's done.*

**– Director John Carpenter in *Time Out* London**

## AWARDS

Nominated in two categories for Best Art Direction (Hal Pereira, Henry Bumstead, Sam Comer, Frank McKelvy) and Best Sound (George Dutton) at the **Academy Awards** in 1956.

## TRIVIA

The iconic poster of spiral motifs was created by famous American graphic designer Saul Bass who also made the opening title sequences.

# WICKER MAN, THE (1973)

**DIRECTOR**
ROBIN HARDY
**STARRING**
EDWARD WOODWARD, CHRISTOPHER LEE, BRITT EKLAND
**RUNNING TIME**
88 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
UNITED KINGDOM
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
ENGLISH
**GENRE**
HORROR

*The Wicker Man* is a British horror film about a police officer Neil Howie, played by Edward Woodward, who goes to an isolated island in search of a missing girl. Summerisle is a beautiful and somewhat strange place.

The locals claim that the girl doesn't exist. Slowly Sergeant Howie, an uptight, straight-laced Christian, discovers that the locals follow a pagan religion. Which means that they worship the elements, celebrate sexuality and also offer human sacrifices to the Gods. Howie is determined to save the girl but in the clash of ideology, ultimately he is unable to save himself.

*The Wicker Man* is a gloriously original and weird movie. We see the unfolding events through Howie's point of view and are as mystified as he is by these people and their rituals – a fertility rite includes women jumping naked over a fire and at one point, Britt Ekland playing the 'sacred whore' does a bizarrely erotic naked slapping dance.

The head of the island is the elegant but disturbing Lord Summerisle, played by Christopher Lee. But underneath the creepiness, director Robin Hardy sets up questions of faith, belief and religious dogma.

*The Wicker Man* was first released in a version, butchered by its distributor British Lion Films (the head honcho Michael Deely said it was 'one of the 10 worst films I've ever seen') but subsequent years have bestowed upon it a cult status. Besides, where else will you see Lee, without *de rigueur* Dracula fangs, so skillfully playing a character that will unsettle you.

*I'm still asked a great deal about* The Wicker Man *because it's become one of the great cult movies of all time. And I've always said it's the best film I've ever made.*

**– Christopher Lee to *Total Film* magazine**

**TRIVIA**

Director Robin Hardy makes a cameo appearance in the film as the preacher in the mainland church scene.

# WOMEN ON THE VERGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN (1988)

*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* is about exactly that – there are several women here, all in various stages of unraveling. At the centre is Pepa, a television actress and dubbing artiste who is pregnant and recently dumped by her married boyfriend. We also have Pepa's friend who was having an affair with a terrorist, Pepa's ex-lover's wife who now wants to kill him and his current mistress who, in a scene that made me laugh out loud, Pepa slaps.

These various characters converge in Pepa's apartment which also contains her burned bed, several chickens and gazpacho, which has been spiked by tranquilizers – you see, Pepa wanted to commit suicide but got distracted and never got around to it.

This is that kind of film – a madly entertaining farce that doesn't go limp. Almodóvar paints in fierce, electric colours and the energy never lets up – my favourite joke is a detergent commercial, in which the police can't catch the murderer because his mother, played by Pepa, has already washed the blood out of his shirt and trousers. Carmen Maura's performance as Pepa has both desperation and strength. This is a woman who hits the edge but eventually endures – both in the film and in your head.

**DIRECTOR**
PEDRO ALMODÓVAR
**STARRING**
CARMEN MAURA, ANTONIO BANDERAS, JULIETA SERRANO
**RUNNING TIME**
90 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
SPAIN
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
SPANISH
**GENRE**
COMEDY, DRAMA

**TRIVIA**

Director Pedro Almodóvar and actress Carmen Maura quarrelled during the making of the film. They didn't work again for 18 years till *Volver* in 2006.

*With a Pedro Almodóvar film, we expect voluptuous sexual perversion, devious plot twists, a snaky interweaving of past and present, all painted on a canvas of bright colours with bold art and clothing.*

**– Roger Ebert, Film critic and author**

## AWARDS

Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the **Academy Awards** (1989), the **Golden Globes** (1989) and the **BAFTA Awards** (1990).

People's Choice Award in 1988 at the **Toronto International Film Festival** and the Best Actress (Carmen Maura) and Best Screenplay (Pedro Almodóvar) at the **Venice Film Festival**.

# Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN (2001)

**DIRECTOR**
ALFONSO CUARÓN
**STARRING**
MARIBEL VERDÚ, GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL, DIEGO LUNA
**RUNNING TIME**
106 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
MEXICO
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
SPANISH
**GENRE**
DRAMA

The summer between high school and university. Two teenage boys in heat. A road trip with an older woman who gives them a master-class in life, love and sex. The material seems suited to soft-porn but in the hands of director Alfonso Cuarón, it becomes a profoundly moving, erotic and insightful coming-of-age film. *Y Tu Mamá También* is Spanish for 'And your Mama Too'.

It's a line that Julio, played by Gael García Bernal, throws at his best friend Tenoch, played by Diego Luna. Both are drunk, giggling, claiming to have slept with each other's girlfriends. The possible conquest of a mother generates more laughter.

There is something almost sweet about their joyous machismo. But Cuarón's masterstroke is that underneath the bawdy humour, he creates a serious and tragic meditation on the fragility of life in an indifferent universe. Through the film, a third-person narrator updates us on events and characters and enables us to see far beyond the triangle – into a divided and corrupt Mexico, the inevitable destruction of life and nature and the secrets that even best friends keep from one another. At one point, we are even told what happens to a herd of pigs that attack the boys' campsite.

Bernal and Luna are close friends in real life and their comfort and chemistry works magic onscreen. The film was shot in sequence, which also helped to make events appear unforced – the actors became more familiar with actress Maribel Verdú who plays their object of desire Luisa, as their characters did. Verdú, sensual, sad and haunted, will stay with you the longest. A word of caution: *Y Tu Mamá También* is frankly sexual and features abundant female and male nudity. So don't watch it with the family.

*One of the reasons why I wanted to do this film was because I wanted to go back to my roots, and I'm not talking about Mexico, but my creative roots: to make a film that we would have loved to do before going to film school, when you don't*

*know how to shoot a movie or compose a shot. It was going to be a film school teacher's nightmare. It was not about breaking the rules, but about not knowing the rules ever existed.*

**– Alfonso Cuarón to indieWIRE.com**

## AWARDS

Carlos Cuarón and Alfonso Cuarón were nominated for the **Academy Award** for Best Original Screenplay in 2003.

Golden Osella (a special award given for various categories) for its screenplay while Gael Garcia Bernal and Diego Luna won the Marcello Mastroianni Award at the **Venice Film Festival** in 2001.

## TRIVIA

In Mexico, the movie was rated for 18 and older. The Mexican government ignored Cuarón's request for an explanation of the rating and Mr Cuarón discovered there wasn't any formal process behind it. The ratings were set by a bureaucrat who had been arbitrarily deciding what films would be shown and to whom for 20 years. Cuarón then sued the government. The suit was not settled but it backfired on the government as the film became very popular in the country.

# Z (1969)

**DIRECTOR**
COSTA-GAVRAS
**STARRING**
JEAN-LOUIS TRINTIGNANT, YVES MONTAND, IRENE PAPAS
**RUNNING TIME**
127 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
FRANCE/ALGERIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
FRENCH, RUSSIAN, ENGLISH
**GENRE**
CRIME, DRAMA, HISTORY

*Z* – the title refers to a Greek slogan, which means 'he lives' – is based in an unnamed country at an unnamed time. The sunny climate and soundtrack by Mikis Theodorakis suggest Greece but everyone speaks French. A pacifist political leader is assassinated on a street, surrounded by police and protestors. The military government deems it an accident but hires a magistrate who is expected to toe the establishment line. Instead, the magistrate ferrets out the truth and exposes the corruption at hand. But even that isn't enough to change the status quo. The film ends with a list of all the things the government eventually bans – from Sophocles to Beckett to even the letter Z.

Costa-Gavras's film, based on the novel with the same name by Vassilis Vassilikos, functions as a comment on politics, corruption and power that is applicable anywhere. The grammar of the film puts you into the centre of the action. *Z* is structured as thriller and procedural. Costa-Gavras doesn't stay with one character. Our attention shifts from the politician to the magistrate to leaders who find the noose slowly tightening around their necks. *Z* won a jury prize at the 1969 Cannes Film Festival and an Oscar for best foreign film. Its bleak and powerful indictment of politics is, sadly, as relevant today. In 2012, director Dibakar Banerjee adapted the novel into a film called *Shanghai*. Not surprisingly, the story was a perfect fit for India.

*My mother used to say stay away from politics, because my father went to prison. But we can't not be involved. By not taking a position, you take a position.*

**– Costa-Gavras in *The Guardian***

## AWARDS

2 **Academy Awards** for Best Foreign Language Film (Algeria) and Best Film Editing (Françoise Bonnot) in 1970.

Also nominated in 3 other categories for Best Picture, Best Director (Costa-Gavras) and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (Jorge Semprun, Costa-Gavras).

The film's score by Mikis Theodorakis won the **BAFTA Award** and was also nominated for Best Film, Best Film Editing and Best Screenplay.

Jean-Louis Trintignant won the Best Actor award and Costa-Gavras the Jury Prize at the **Cannes Film Festival** in 1969. Nominated for the **Palme d'Or** as well.

The **Golden Globe** for Best Foreign-Language Film in 1970.

**TRIVIA**

The film holds the record for the movie with the shortest title to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture.

# ZANJEER (1973)

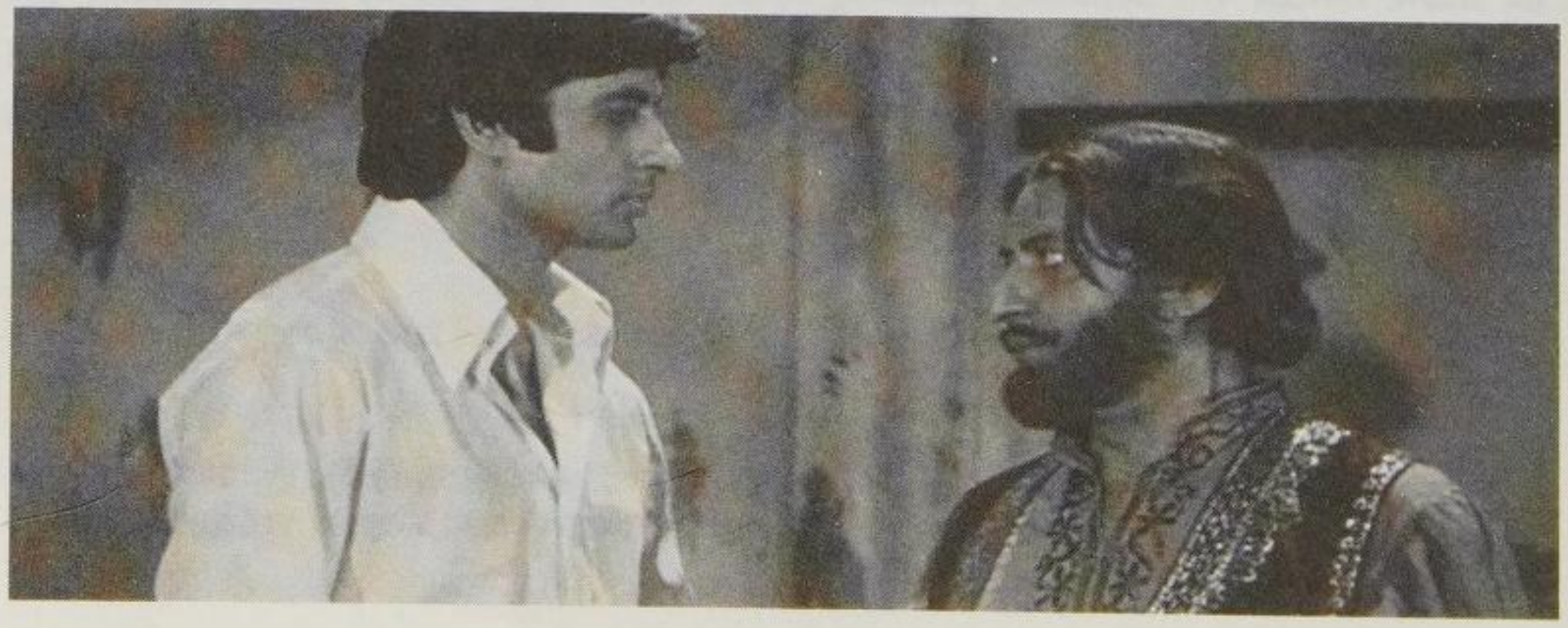
**DIRECTOR**
PRAKASH MEHRA
**STARRING**
AMITABH BACHCHAN, JAYA BHADURI, AJIT, PRAN
**RUNNING TIME**
145 MINUTES
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
INDIA
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE**
HINDI
**GENRE**
DRAMA

Elements of *Zanjeer* seem comically dated now – the zooming camera, the clunky cuts, the over-the-top background music and of course the outlandish outfits, especially the feathers and sequins preferred by Mona the vamp, played by a furiously plump Bindu. And yet, Prakash Mehra's 1973 film about a psychologically damaged cop has much to offer.

Above all, there is the 30-year-old Amitabh Bachchan as the lean, mean fighting machine Inspector Vijay whose childhood demons – he witnessed the murder of his parents – gnaw at his insides. Vijay seems to carry an existential weight upon his shoulders. His bleak eyes reveal his bruised soul. His foil is arch-villain Teja, played by Ajit in a golden wig.

Teja is a super suave killer who never, ever loses his cool. He hatches his nefarious plots while playing billiards or sits in a night-gown by the poolside dispensing wisdom to Mona. When she asks why Vijay refuses to take a bribe, he replies: *Jis tarah kuch aadmiyon ki bimari baimani hoti hai, usi tarah kuch aadmiyon ki bimari imandari hoti hai.*

Salim-Javed's award-winning script is studded with killer lines like these. So when Pran who plays the robust criminal Sher Khan is offered the job of killing Inspector Vijay, he replies: *Sher Khan sher ka shikar nahin karta.* *Zanjeer* set up the prototype of the 'Angry Young Man', a character that dominated Hindi cinema for the next two decades.



In Nasreen Munni Kabir's book *Talking Films*, Javed Akhtar says that Vijay's anger was such a new experience that audiences were stunned into an awed silence and actors like Dharmendra and Dev Anand declined the role because they couldn't understand what type of hero this was. This was a traumatized hero for a turbulent time. His rage still makes compelling viewing.

*At the time it was made, in 1973, the* Zanjeer *hero was a new image. Prakash Mehra had approached well-known stars, Dev Anand ji and Raaj Kumar ji among others, for the role. I readily accepted the film, I needed the work. I didn't know of course that the film would be so successful. But I loved the character that Salim-Javed had created. I felt comfortable with the brooding man, whose emotions had strong undertones. I was relieved there were no songs and dances to go with it.*

**– Amitabh Bachchan in *To Be or Not To Be: Amitabh Bachchan***

## AWARDS

4 **Filmfare awards** in 1974 for Best Editor (Ramchandra Mahadik), Best Lyricist (Gulshan Bawra) for the song *Yaari hai imaan mera* and Best Screenplay and Best Story Writer for (Salim Khan-Javed Akhtar)

## TRIVIA

This film was Salim-Javed's first independently credited film. They had previously assisted in the scripting of films such as *Andaz* and *Haathi Mere Saathi*.

# FILM STILLS/PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY

1. **Aguirre: The Wrath of God** – Werner Herzog
2. **Amar Akbar Anthony** – Shemaroo Entertainment Ltd
3. **Amar Prem** – Best compliments from Shakti Films (Ashim Samanta)
4. **Anand** – Rupam Films Pvt Ltd
5. **Andaz** – Shemaroo Entertainment Ltd
6. **Ardh Satya** – Neo Films Associates
7. **Arth** – Eagle Home Entertainment
8. **Bandini** – Shemaroo Entertainment Ltd
9. **Bandit Queen** – Bobby Bedi
10. **Battleship Potemkin** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
11. **Belle de Jour** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
12. **Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
13. **Charulata** – Satyajit Ray Society and Ray family, Kolkata
14. **Children of Heaven** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
15. **Chungking Express** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
16. **Chupke Chupke** – Eagle Home Entertainment
17. **Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon** – Sony DADC
18. **Deewaar** – Trimurti Films Pvt Ltd
19. **Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge** – Yash Raj Films Pvt. Ltd
20. **E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial** – NBC Universal
21. **Hum Dono** – Navketan Films
22. **In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones** – Pankaj Rakesh
23. **Infernal Affairs** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
24. **Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro** – NFDC Cinemas of India
25. **Junoon** – FILM-VALAS
26. **Kabhi Kabhie** – Yash Raj Films Pvt. Ltd.
27. **Kung Fu Hustle** – Sony DADC
28. **La Dolce Vita** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
29. **Lagaan** – Aamir Khan Productions
30. **Lost in Translation** – NBC Universal
31. **Modern Times** – Eagle Home Entertainment
32. **Mother India** – Mehboob Productions Pvt Ltd, Mumbai, India
33. **Mughal-e-Azam** – Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.
34. **Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
35. **Parinda** – Vinod Chopra Films
36. **Pyaasa** – Guru Dutt Films Acting Academy
37. **Shakespeare in Love** – NBC Universal
38. **Sholay** – Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.
39. **Sullivan's Travels** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
40. **Taxi Driver** – Sony DADC
41. **Teesri Manzil** – Nasir Husain Films Pvt Ltd
42. **The 40-Year-Old Virgin** – NBC Universal
43. **The Edge of Heaven** – Corazon International - Hamburg
44. **To Be or Not to Be** – Enlighten Film Company Pvt Ltd
45. **To Kill a Mockingbird** – NBC Universal
46. **Vertigo** – NBC Universal
47. **Zanjeer** – Prakash Mehra, Sumeet Mehra, Amit Mehra, Puneet Prakash Mehra

# TRIVIA CREDIT LIST

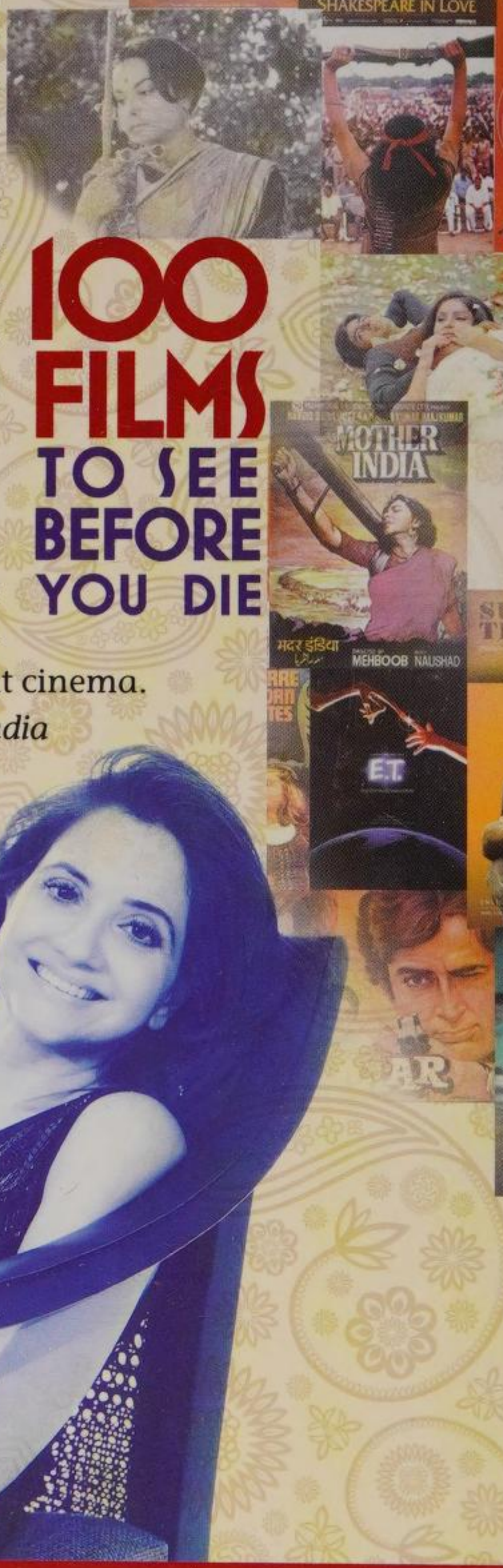
1. **40-Year-Old Virgin, The** – *People* magazine
2. **A Better Tomorrow** – *John Woo's A Better Tomorrow* by Karen Y. Fang
3. **A Streetcar Named Desire** – *Magic Movie Moments* by authors George Perry, Bob Adelman, Michael Rand, Terry Gilliam.
4. **Ace in the Hole** – *Criterion Film Essay* by Molly Haskell
5. **Aguirre: The Wrath of God** – Roger Ebert's interview with Werner Herzog
6. **Alien** – Salon
7. **All About Eve** – Oscars.org
8. **Amadeus** – *People* magazine
9. **Amar Akbar Anthony** – *So Many Cinemas: The Motion Picture in India* by B.D. Garga
10. **Amar Prem** – Rediff
11. **Amores Perros** – *The Guardian*
12. **Anand** – *So Many Cinemas: The Motion Picture in India* by B.D. Garga
13. **Andaz** – Rediff
14. **Annie Hall** – *The American Scholar Essay* by Mark Edmundson
15. **Ardh Satya** – *The Times of India*
16. **Arth** – *The Times of India*
17. **Bandini** – *The Hindu*
18. **Bandit Queen** – *FHM* Magazine
19. **Battleship Potemkin** – *Magic Movie Moments* by authors George Perry, Bob Adelman, Michael Rand, Terry Gilliam.
20. **Bicycle Thieves/The Bicycle Thief** – *The Guardian*
21. **Bonnie and Clyde** – *Turner Classic Movies article* by Frank Miller
22. **Boogie Nights** – Boogie Nights DVD director's commentary
23. **Borat** – BBC
24. **Brazil** – *The Directors: Take Two* by Robert J. Emery
25. **Breakfast at Tiffany's** – *New York Times*
26. **Breathless** – *Magic Movie Moments* by authors George Perry, Bob Adelman, Michael Rand, Terry Gilliam.
27. **Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid** – *Turner Classic Movies article* by Rob Nixon
28. **Casablanca** – *Time* magazine
29. **Charulata** – *So Many Cinemas: The Motion Picture in India* by B.D. Garga
30. **Children of Heaven** – *Hindustan Times*
31. **Chungking Express** – *Criterion Film Essay* by Amy Taubin
32. **Chupke Chupke** – *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* by editors Gulzar, Govind Nihalani, Saibal Chatterjee
33. **Cinema Paradiso** – *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the present* by Peter E. Bondanella
34. **Citizen Kane** – *New York Times*
35. **City of God** – City of God DVD extras
36. **Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon** – *The Guardian*
37. **Deewaar** – *Amitabh Bachchan, The Legend* by Bhawana Somaaya
38. **Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge** – *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ): BFI Modern Film Classics* by Anupama Chopra
30. **Don** – Rediff
40. **Enter the Dragon** – Jackie Chan Official Website
41. **Farewell My Concubine** – *I am Jackie Chan: My Life in Action* by Jackie Chan and Jeff Yang
42. **Godfather, The** – MSNBC
43. **In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones** – *India Today*
44. **Infernal Affairs** – British Film Institute

45. **Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro** – *The Front Row with Anupama Chopra*
46. **Jules et Jim** – *Criterion Film Essay* by John Powers
47. **Junoon** –*Take 25: Star Insights & Attitudes* by Bhawana Somaaya
48. **Kabhi Kabhie** – *Yash Chopra: Fifty Years in Indian Cinema* by Rachel Dwyer
49. **Kikujiro** – *Chicago Reader*
50. **Kung Fu Hustle** – *The Guardian*
51. **La Dolce Vita** – *Magic Movie Moments* by authors George Perry, Bob Adelman, Michael Rand, Terry Gilliam.
52. **Lagaan** – *The Spirit of Lagaan* by Satyajit Bhatkal
53. **Lawrence of Arabia** – *The Guardian*
54. **Lost in Translation** – Roger Ebert's review of the film
55. **Marriage of Maria Braun, The** – *The Guardian*
56. **Modern Times** – Charlie Chaplin Official website
57. **Mother India** – Rediff
58. **Mughal-e-Azam** – Mughal-e-Azam official website
59. **Night Watch** – *New York Times*
60. **Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror** – *Belfast Telegraph*
61. **Oldboy** – *AV Club article* by Scott Tobias
62. **Pan's Labyrinth** – *The Guardian*
63. **Parinda** – *Kitnay Aadmi Thay* by Diptakirti Chaudhari
64. **Player, The** – AMC Movie Blog
65. **Pulp Fiction** – *Empire* magazine
66. **Pyaasa** – *So Many Cinemas: The Motion Picture in India* by B.D. Garga
67. **Raiders of the Lost Ark** – *Vanity Fair article 'Keys to the Kingdom'* by Jim Windolf
68. **Raise the Red Lantern** – *Senses of Cinema Essay* by David Neo
69. **Rashomon** – *Something Like an Autobiography* by Akira Kurosawa
70. **Rules of the Game, The** – *Criterion Essay* by Alexander Sesonske
71. **Saturday Night Fever** – Roger Ebert's review
72. **Seventh Seal** – Ingmar Bergman Official Website
73. **Shakespeare in Love** – *The Guardian*
74. **Shining, The** – *Bare Bones: Conversations in Terror with Stephen King* by Tim Underwood and Stephen King
75. **Sholay** – Sholay – *Making of a Classic* by Anupama Chopra
76. **Sideways** – *The Sunday Times*
77. **Spirited Away** – *The Anime Art of Hayao Miyazaki* by Dani Cavallaro
78. **Star Wars** – *The Telegraph*
79. **Sullivan's Travels** – Joel and Ethan Coen on their O Brother, Where Art Thou? Special-Edition DVD Commentary
80. **Tampopo** – *Los Angeles Times*
81. **Teesri Manzil** – Firstpost.com
82. **This Is Spinal Tap** – Criterion DVD commentary
83. **To Be or Not to Be** – Clark Gable official website
84. **To Kill a Mockingbird** – *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee* by Charles J. Shields
85. **Tokyo Story** – *The Guardian*
86. **Underground** – *New York Times*
87. **Vertigo** – *Turner Classic Movies article* by John M.
88. **Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown** – *The Guardian*
89. **Y Tu Mamá También** – *New York Times*
90. **Z** – Oscars.org
91. **Zanjeer** – *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* by editors Gulzar, Govind Nihalani, Saibal Chatterjee

*Sholay* and *Y Tu Mamá También*. *Charulata* and *Cinema Paradiso*. These seemingly disparate films are bound together by one thing – each one is terrific. Each one provides a cinematic high. When you watch these films, something fundamental shifts inside. This book isn't a list of greatest films ever made because films are a subjective passion. This is a list of films that I have loved, films that have spoken to me, films that have inspired me to keep watching films. I hope it does the same for you.

❖

**Anupama Chopra** is an award-winning author and film critic. She has hosted popular review shows on television and written extensively about cinema. Her work has been published in *India Today*, *The New York Times*, *LA Times* and *Vogue India*. Her first book, *Sholay: The Making of a Classic* won a National Award for the best book on cinema. She lives and works in Mumbai.




Published, Marketed & Distributed by
Times Group Books
A division of
Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.
www.tgb.indiatimes.com

ISBN 978-93-82299-35-6
9 789382 299356
₹299